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VIJAYAWADA, TUESDAY, MAY 17, 2022: PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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BIGG BOSS WAS A LEARNING STAGE FOR ME: SIRI HANUMANTH

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SC RESTRAINS SON FROM DEALING IN PROPERTIES OF 89-YEAR-OLD MOTHER

You seem to be more interested in her properties. This is the tragedy of senior citizens in our country, said the Supreme Court as it restrained a son from dealing with properties of her 89-year-old mother, suffering from advanced dementia and having no comprehension of either verbal or physical cues. A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and Surya Kant took serious note of the fact that the son took his mother who is also virtually immobile to a registrar's office in Motihari, Bihar to get her thumb impression to allegedly sell off her properties worth Rs two crore.

SWEDISH LAWMAKERS DEBATE JOINING NATO AS ATTITUDES CHANGE

Sweden's prime minister announced Monday that Sweden will join Finland in seeking NATO membership in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a historic shift that comes after more than 200 years of military nonalignment in the Nordic country. The move, which is likely to upset the government of Russian President Vladimir Putin, came after neighbouring Finland announced Sunday that it too would seek to join the 30-country military alliance. Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson called it a historic change in our country's security policy as she addressed lawmakers in the Swedish capital.

PAWAN HANS SALE ON HOLD OVER NCLT ORDER AGAINST WINNING CONSORTIUM MEMBER

The government has put on hold the sale of Pawan Hans as it is legally examining an NCLT order against Almas Global, which is the biggest shareholder in the winning consortium, an official said on Monday. Last month, the government selected M/s Star9 Mobility Pvt Ltd, a consortium of M/s Big Charter Private Ltd, M/s Maharaja Aviation Private Ltd and M/s Almas Global Opportunity Fund SPC, as the winning bidder for Pawan Hans. While Big Charter and Maharaja Aviation own 26 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively, in the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) M/s Star9 Mobility Pvt Ltd, Almas Global Opportunity Fund SPC holds 49 per cent.

AJAY SRINIVASAN QUITS AS MD OF ADITYA BIRLA CAPITAL

NBFC firm Aditya Birla Capital Ltd (ABCL) on Monday said Ajay Srinivasan has decided to step down as MD and CEO of the company and his departure has nothing to do with an investigation into alleged irregularities and corruption. According to reports, serious allegations of corruption and mismanagement have been levelled by a whistleblower against the company and the top management. Refuting allegations, Aditya Birla Capital's spokesperson said Srinivasan had expressed his desire to take on a new role within the group after having served as Chief Executive for over 14 years and a new role is being crafted at the Group level in consultation with him.

Dedicated logistics cell in AP

SNV SUDHIR
VIJAYAWADA

The YS Jaganmohan Reddy government will prepare a state logistic plan mapping existing and upcoming logistics facilities along with setting up an exclusive state logistics cell as part of the proposed Integrated Logistics Policy to leverage the advantages of Andhra Pradesh as a gateway for trade and commerce in India's east coast.

Andhra Pradesh in line with the Government of India's plans is formulating an Integrated Logistics Policy and its draft was approved by the State Cabinet recently.

While the policy aims to address infrastructure gaps in logistics and supply chain in the State, the government has plans to create institutional mechanisms, develop infrastructure and also provide technical support to develop the logistics sector in the State.

"The government will prepare a State Logistic Plan duly mapping the existing and upcoming logistical facilities throughout the State, which include all modes of transport, aligning with the National Master Plan.

The areas of intervention, improvement, and development will be identified based on the present and future needs of both state and central domains.



Tech-enabled CCCs on the anvil

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government also has plans to set up technology-enabled integrated command and control center (ICCC) that integrate with all the touchpoints of cargo containers and also provides Logistics Carrier Cards (LCC) to the drivers of heavy vehicles.

With a vision to better manage the movement of cargo containers and other freight handling heavy vehicles, integrating all the existing IT applications, a command, and control center (ICCC) will be set up under the supervision of the State Logistic Cell to reduce the number of physical checks, induce transparency, and for hassle-free movement of men and material.

The ICCC will be integrated with all the touchpoints of cargo containers such as Inland Container Depots (ICDs), Container Freight Stations (CFS), Port Area and Customs House, Truck Parking Bays, Check posts, and Toll gates. For the implementation of ICCC, all the heavy vehicles handling cargo operations along with the containers will be equipped with RFID tags and the driver of the vehicles be given smart cards called Logistics Carrier Cards.

LOGISTIC INFRA IN AP

- 4th largest warehousing capacity of 13.38 Lakh MT
- 283 Railroad goods sSheds
- 5th largest cold storage capacity of 15.67 Lakh MT
- 16 Logistic training centres
- 3 Inland container depots (ICDs)
- 4 Agri Export Zones (AEZ)
- 17 Container freight sStations (CFSS)
- 25 Special Economic Zones (SEZ)
- 5 Air cargo terminals
- 70 Export-oriented units (EOUs)
- 3rd largest state in terms of cargo traffic of 173 MMT handled at the ports.

HC grants anticipatory bail to Narayana's family members

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh High Court on Monday granted anticipatory bail to the daughters and son-in-law of former minister P Narayana and some others in the Class 10 question paper leak case. The High Court granted anticipatory bail to Narayana's daughters P Sharani and P Sindhura, son-in-law K Punith and 10 others from Narayana Educational Institutions.

A House motion petition has been filed by them and Justice K Manmadha Rao passed interim orders, directing the government not to take any action against the daughters of Narayana and a few of Narayana educational institutions and adjourned the hearing to May 18.

It may be recalled that Narayana Institutions' founder P Narayana, was arrested last week in connection with the Class 10 question paper leak case. A team of Chittoor police had taken him into custody



in Hyderabad on May 10. He was produced before a magistrate in Chittoor on May 11. However, the magistrate granted bail as Narayana is no longer the chairman of the Narayana Group.

Narayana and seven others were arrested in a case registered in Chittoor town in connection with the Class 10 Telugu question paper leak on April 27. In the wake of Narayana's arrest, his daughters, son-in-law, and others associated

It may be recalled that Narayana Institutions' founder P Narayana, was arrested last week in connection with the Class 10 question paper leak case.

with the Narayana Institutions moved the High Court, seeking anticipatory bail.

SBI hikes lending rate by 0.1%, EMIs to go up

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's largest lender State Bank of India has raised its marginal cost of funds based lending rate by 10 basis points or 0.1 per cent across all tenures, a move that will lead to an increase in EMIs for borrowers.

This is the second hike in a month raising the cost by 0.2 per cent with the two consecutive increases.

The revision follows an off-cycle rate increase by the Reserve Bank earlier this month. The central bank hiked the repo rate -- at which it lends short term money to banks -- by 0.40 per cent to 4.40 per cent.

Farmers in AP bearing the brunt of 'unwise' policies of govt: Manohar

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena Party (JSP) political affairs committee chairman Nadendla Manohar dared Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy to prove that those who received Rs 1 lakh financial help from Pawan Kalyan were not the families of tenant farmers.

In a statement here on Monday, Manohar alleged that Jagan Mohan Reddy was deceiving farmers by extending only Rs 13,500 financial assistance.

"In fact, the State government has to extend Rs 19,500 to the farmers, as the Central government is also extending financial help to them. But the Jagan Reddy government is saving Rs 6000 by extending only Rs 13,500 to the farmers, he flayed.

"When the suicides of tenant farmers are growing, the Jagan Reddy government had adopted an indifference attitude by not responding on the issue", he slammed.



Muslims not ready to lose another mosque: Owaisi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Monday said Muslims are not ready to lose another mosque after the Babri Masjid, on a day it was claimed in a Varanasi court that a Shivling was found in the Gyanvapi complex during a survey. Reacting to the development, Uttar

Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya tweeted, "No matter how much you hide the truth, it will come out one day." "Satya hi Shiv hai (Truth is Shiva)," he said.

The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) claimed that the "finding" has proved that earlier a temple stood on the spot.

Earlier in the day, a Varanasi court directed the district administration to seal a pond in the Gyanvapi Masjid complex after counsels representing the Hindu petitioners said a Shivling was found during a court-mandated videography survey.



Mahanadu to be held at Trovagunta in Prakasam on May 27 & 28
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TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham:
Tithi: Dwitaya: May 17 06:25 AM to May 18 03:00 AM
Tritiya: May 18 03:00 AM to May 18 11:37 PM
Nakshatram:
Anuradha: May 16 01:18 PM to May 17 10:46 AM
Jyeshtha: May 17 10:46 AM to May 18 08:09 AM
Rahukalam: 3:25 PM to 5:01 PM
Yamagandam: 9:00 AM to 10:36 AM
Varjyam: 03:46 PM to 05:11 PM
Gulika: 12:12 PM to 1:48 PM
Amritakalam: 12:19 AM to 01:44 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:46 AM to 12:38 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Partly cloudy
Temp: 37°C
Humidity: 55%
Sunrise: 5:40 AM
Sunset: 6:34 PM
Updated: MAY 16, 2022 5:00 PM

China building infra near Arunachal: Army

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

The Indian Army's Eastern Command chief on Monday said China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) is engaged in infrastructure capacity enhancement across the international border in Arunachal Pradesh.

General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Eastern Command, Lt Gen R P Kalita, however, said the Indian side is also continuously upgrading its infrastructure and capabilities to deal with any situation that may arise along the border.

"Across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Tibet region, a lot of infrastructure development is going on. The other side is constantly upgrading their road, rail and air connectivity as well as 5G



mobile network so that they are in a better position to respond to a situation or mobilise forces," he said at a press conference here. The Chinese authorities have built border villages close to the LAC that can be used for dual purposes, Kalita said. "We are continuously monitor-

ing the situation. We are also upgrading our infrastructure and capabilities as well as the mechanism to handle the situation. These have put us in a robust position," he added.

Kalita asserted that the Indian Army is fully ready with "high level of operational preparedness".

Monsoon arrives in Andaman & Nicobar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Southwest monsoon has advanced into the Andaman and Nicobar islands on Monday, the India Meteorological Department said here, signalling the start of the four-month seasonal rains that are crucial to the largely agri-dependent economy.

The Andaman and Nicobar islands and adjoining areas have been experiencing rainfall due to strengthening south-westerly winds in the lower tropospheric levels, the weather office said.

"Conditions are favourable for further advance of southwest mon-

soon into some more parts of south Bay of Bengal, entire Andaman Sea & Andaman Islands and some parts of east-central Bay of Bengal during next 2-3 days, the IMD said in a statement here.

The presence of cyclonic circulations over Lakshadweep and north Tamil Nadu coast are expected to bring fairly widespread rainfall with isolated thunderstorm/lightning/gusty winds with isolated heavy to very heavy falls over Kerala, Coastal & South Interior Karnataka during the next five days, it said.

Modi has emerged as an undisputed leader today

Over 400-strong intelligentsia have been racking their brains to breathe life into the Congress party, whose future, because of the deadwood, appears bleak. At the same time, Vigyan Bhawan in Delhi provided the perfect setting for Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu and Home Minister Amit Shah and several other party leaders to share with the world at large the rapid strides the country has been making under leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

At a time when Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was expressing concern over the Congress losing contacts with people in Udaipur, a book titled 'Modi @ 20' was released at a programme held in Vigyan Bhawan.

The book is a compilation of articles authored by VIPs across the country on how the country is blazing a trail under the leadership of Modi and how he sacrificed his life for the sake of the country in his political career that spans more than two decades overcoming several hurdles.

The two incidents reflect the political situation in the

country. Union Home Minister Amit Shah, speaking while releasing the book, likened Modi @ 20 to the Bhagavad Gita for those who are engaged in social service and political realms of the country and for those who want to acquire a complete personality.

His words are true because most of the contributors of the articles to the book have nothing to do with politics. The authors are world-renowned economists Surjit Bhalla, V Ananta Nageswaran, Shamika Ravi and Aravind Panagariya, renowned businessmen Anand Mahendra, Sobhana Kamineni, Ajay Banga. Besides, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, Infosys former founder Nandan Nilekani, Narayana Hrudayalaya Chairman Devi Shetty, noted playback singer late Lata Mangeshkar, ace badminton player PV Sindhu, national security advisor Ajit Doval, Bollywood hero Amir Khan, social activist Sudha Murthy and Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev have penned their views on Modi.

The book reflects the per-

The book is a compilation of articles authored by VIPs across the country on how the country is blazing a trail under the leadership of Modi and how he sacrificed his life for the sake of the country in his political career that spans more than two decades overcoming several hurdles.

spective of youth, scientists, businessmen, economists, social workers, spiritual leaders about Modi and the progress achieved by the country under his leadership.

In the words of Amit Shah, who has been closely associated with Modi for several decades, "Modi, who worked as an RSS activist in 1970 and as BJP activist in 1980 will achieve any task that is assigned to him." He called Modi an achiever.

Modi was given the responsibility of getting the party candidates elected for the first time in 1987 in the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation polls.

Modi not only ensured BJP's victory, but also ensured that BJP won the city Mayor post. He worked as party in-charge in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and made

the people realize what the true potential of the BJP is. Modi is aware of the strengths of the BJP and that of the Sangh Parivar.

He knows how to use them and when. Amit Shah said that Modi would finalise the strategy after going through every minute aspect.

When the country was rocked by coalition politics, family rule, corrupt fiefdoms, compromises with terrorism, weak PM during 1989-2014, Modi emerged as a stronger alternative to them and established the BJP rule at the Centre, after a gap of five decades, Amit Shah said, calling it no mean achievement.

Modi showed how to achieve majority by attracting leaders from other parties capable of influencing 30-40 per cent of the voters.

Apart from drawing up a political strategy and earning



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

the trust of the people, Modi has emerged as an undisputed leader today by making impossible tasks possible. Amit Shah dwelt on how Modi diverted River Narmada from south Gujarat to the Saurashtra region, how Modi rebuilt the floods ravaged Morbi, how he implemented developmental projects worth several thousands of crores, and how he took welfare schemes close to people.

In many welfare measures being implemented in the country, women derive the maximum benefits. That is why, over 65 per cent of women vote for Modi, explains Amit Shah.

Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu said that Modi proved to world how to realize dreams. Today, Modi sealed his position in the history of independent India, he said while releasing the book amidst of thunderous applause from the gathering.

People of all regions treat Modi as their family member, avers Lata Mangeshkar in her article penned a few days before she passed away. She mentions that Modi has safeguarded the culture of the country and its heritage.

Young sports sensation PV Sindhu describes Modi as a representative of the youth of the country. Modi would not compromise on anything and perseveres to achieve what he wanted.

This is the main characteristic of Modi, she said. She pointed out how IITs, IIITs, AIIMs, IIMs have been increased on a large scale during Modi's regime. With Modi at the helms of affairs, every sportsperson is bubbling with confidence, she said.

Sobhana Kamineni said that 81 per cent of the beneficiaries of Star of India and 70 per cent of Mudra Yojana are women. It stands as an example of priority women get under the Modi regime. Infant and child mortality rates come down drastically in the country soon after Modi came to power, she said.

IMF Executive Director Kristalina Georgieva said that Modi during the first five years of his tenure focused on increasing solar power from 2.6 giga watt to 37 giga watt and was presently focused on making India number one economy in world.

Since 2014, overseas investments rose by 30 billion US dollars annually. Now the investments have begun to grow by 40 billion US dollars annually, according to principal advisor to Finance Ministry Ananta Nageswaran.

Noted economist and NITI Aayog first vice-chairman Aravind Panagariya says that he had realized the true potential of Narendra Modi when he kicked off the vibrant Gujarat in Gujarat

state. He got an opportunity to know which economic zones witnessed development up to what extent.

Modi focused mainly on elimination of rural poverty, rural electrification and development of villages, former principal secretary Nrupen Misra, said drawing from his experience.

National Security Advisor Ajit Dhaval said that the credit for evolving novel security policy goes to Narendra Modi. He listed out series of successes achieved by Narendra Modi, right from tackling Left-Wing extremism to terrorism in J and K. His puts national interests above all and would not compromise on it, he added.

Winds of change are sweeping across the country, says noted author Sudha Murthy explaining the central idea of the book in one word.

It is not easy for the Opposition to withstand the winds of change. It is not easy for the time-barred Congress leaders to gain a foothold in the country that is basking under the glory of Modi, no matter how many meetings it holds like the one held in Udaipur.

People happy with governance: Ambati

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Asserting that the YSRC government has fulfilled 95 per cent of the promises made in the manifesto, Minister for Water Resources Ambati Rambabu said that people were extremely happy with the good governance and giving a happy feedback during the door-to-door campaign.

Addressing a press conference here, the minister said that people were satisfied with YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's welfare schemes and good governance, and were welcoming the YSRC leaders with joy during the door-to-door campaign.

He bashed the Opposition and a section of the media for 'false propaganda' against the



campaign and opined that Chandrababu Naidu had a record of not telling a single truth in his life.

"Unlike Chandrababu, who got rid of the 45-page manifesto after forming the government, the current government is going with a ballot of 50 questions clearly explaining the schemes implemented,

along with a letter written by the Chief Minister addressing the public and the election manifesto," he said, adding that it was the only government in the country that implemented 95 per cent of the poll promises. He stated that all the party leaders, MLAs and ministers were visiting houses and taking feedback.

Minister Rambabu said that people were ready to reject Chandrababu again as they were fed up with his lies and betrayals. Since Naidu also knew about this, he was trying to team up with other parties to fight against the YSRC. He exuded confidence that YS Jagan Mohan Reddy would come back as Chief Minister, as he had already won people's hearts.

WaterAid India working on drinking water projects

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

WaterAid India coordinator Kattar Kandi Bajjesh has said that they are working on fresh drinking water projects in the country as per a plan. The organisation is conducting public awareness campaigns on drinking water in 13 States.

He said that three districts in Andhra Pradesh had been selected for the campaign and services were started in Pushpathiga, Bhogapuram mandals in Vizianagaram district, Palamaneru and Gangavaram mandals in Chittoor district and Macherla and Veldurthy mandals of Palnadu district.

They are working in coor-



WaterAid programme coordinator Kattar Kandi Bajjesh addressing a press conference in Vijayawada on Monday. Pic by Ch Vijaya Bhaskar

Water mobilisation units will be set up on the school premises to sensitise students from early in life. An agreement with the government agency to this effect would be signed soon, said Kattarakandi Bajjesh.

sations on water conservation, water availability, quality, sanitation and other issues, with the support of the Rural Water Supply Department on issues like rainwater harvesting, care, cleaning etc. in the respective villages.

Water mobilisation units will be set up on the school premises to sensitise students from the school level. An agreement with the government agency to this effect would be signed soon, said Kattarakandi Bajjesh.

Vja-Nagpur expressway gets NHA...

Continued from Page 1

The new express highway constructed from Vijayawada via Khammam, Warangal, and Mancherla, will reduce the distance between Vijayawada and Nagpur by 163 km and save travel time as well.

With the DPR already prepared, the NHA has expedited consultations with the Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Maharashtra governments on the land acquisition process. The Revenue Department is preparing for the acquisition of about 1.65 lakh square meters of land in Vijayawada Rural, G Kondur, and Gampalagudem mandals. NHA aims to complete the tender process by December and complete the construction of the express highway by 2025.

Former minister...

Continued from Page 1

"The respect and admiration Narendra Modi had towards Dr. B R Ambedkar compelled me to join the BJP. I still feel Modi's leadership was very much essential for the country to develop into a powerful nation in the world and overcome the socio-economic and political inequalities," he said.

While thanking Veeraj for giving him a prominent position in the party by making him BJP vice-president, Kishore Babu said he was unable to continue in the party for personal and family reasons.

Ravela Kishore Babu, who had quit IRTS job, entered politics by joining TDP before the 2014 elections. He had won from the Prathipadu constituency in Guntur district and was made social welfare minister.

However, in March 2017, he was dropped from the Cabinet during the cabinet expansion.

In March 2018, he quit TDP and joined Jana Sena. In the 2019 Assembly elections, Ravela Kishore Babu contested from the same Prathipadu constituency but lost the seat with a big margin.

Dedicated logistics...

Continued from Page 1

The capacity and efficiency of facilities will be taken into account while mapping the facilities. The action plan will be broken into annual plans, based on the priority of the interventions, improvements, development of projects, to be taken up. The bottlenecks and challenges already identified will be attended to on a priority basis," said a senior government official.

As part of creating an institutional mechanism, an Empowered Group of Secretaries (EGoS) will be constituted under the Chairmanship of the State Chief Secretary with a Special Secretary to Government, Industries, and Commerce, Infrastructure, and Investment as member-convenor with all the stakeholder departments, as members for monitoring the master plan and approving any changes in the Master plan to meet any emerging requirements.

Andhra Pradesh will also have a dedicated umbrella State Logistic Cell (SLC) besides City Logistic Cells (CLCs) across the State.

State Logistic Cell (SLC) will be established in the Industries and Commerce department under the Commerce wing, headed by a director-level officer.

The SLC will serve as a liaison between the Logistics Division (LD) at the Centre and the EoGS at the state, and provide secretarial support to EoGS. The State Logistic Cell will be supported by City Logistic Cells (CLC).

City Logistic Cells will act as city-level working groups under State Logistics Cell and all CLCs will be under the jurisdiction of Municipal Administration & Urban Development (MA & UD). These cells are responsible for the preparation of City Plans and assist SLCs in the framing of City Logistic Plan and their implementation.

The Government of India has also set up a Logistics Division under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, which is poised to streamline logistics services and related infrastructure development in the country with the support from the states, with an intention to reduce logistics costs and decongest cities from freight carriers.

China building infra near...

Continued from Page 1

He also denied that any intrusion is taking place along the border with China and whatever is reported, that is only due to the perceptual issue.

"Once the boundary is properly demarcated, I hope there will be no problem," he said, adding there has been no case of intrusion since the 1962 war.

Asked about the Land Borders Law that China enacted

from January giving more power to the PLA to protect their sovereignty and boundary, he said that the Army and other stakeholders are analysing various implications of the new laws.

"The necessary deductions have been made and we are preparing our forces to meet the challenge," he said without elaborating.

Kalita added, "The eastern border has numerous challenges. We have displayed

exemplary professionalism and bravery. Last one year has been extremely eventful and we have been rising up to meet all challenges. We are ready to take on all challenges in future."

He said that for the India-China border, the Indian Army has a robust mechanism in place. This includes bilateral agreements and various protocols to defuse tensions and maintain peace and tranquility.

Muslims not ready...

Continued from Page 1

Referring to the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya three decades ago and a 1949 incident when idols of Hindu deities surfaced there, Owaisi asked Muslims to take a pledge that they won't allow its repeat in Varanasi.

In a video posted on his twitter handle, Owaisi said Muslims are not ready to lose another mosque after the Babri Masjid.

"When I was 19-20 years old, the Babri Masjid was snatched from us, and inshallah, we will not allow this to happen with children of the age group," he said.

He urged community members to take a pledge that they won't allow the loss of another mosque.

"We know your tactics and we will not allow you to sting again," he said apparently referring to right-wing Hindu outfits.

"The mosque exists and it will exist inshallah till the judgment day. The Gyanvapi mosque existed and till the time Allah keeps the world intact, the mosque will remain," he said.

Owaisi said Muslims should

make efforts that mosques keep flourishing.

"Ramzan is over and the walls of mosques are longing for people, who had offered namaz at the home of the God for 30 days. The mosques in villages and localities should be kept alive as evil forces want to deprive us of our culture. They should get the message that the Muslims are not ready to lose a mosque in India again," Owaisi said.

In a tweet, the AIMIM chief also said the incident is a textbook repeat of December 1949 in Babri Masjid, apparently referring to the appearance of idols in the mosque then.

The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) expressed happiness over the claimed discovery and said it proved that earlier a temple existed there.

"This Shilving was found in the presence of lawyers from both sides. Therefore, the place where the Shilving has been found is a temple. It has been proved," VHP's working president Alok Kumar said in Prayagraj on Monday.

"I hope this evidence will be respected by people of the whole country," he said, hoping that this matter would reach its logical conclusion.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin	₹300
Without Skin	₹320
Broiler at Farm	₹169

EGG RATES ₹/100

VIJAYAWADA	385
HYDERABAD	385
VISAKHAPATNAM	410
RETAIL PRICE	₹3.85

Monsoon arrives in Andaman...

Continued from Page 1

The weather office said isolated heavy rainfall was expected over Tamil Nadu from Monday to Wednesday and over Lakshadweep area over the next two days. It said isolated extremely heavy falls are also likely over coastal & south interior Karnataka on

Wednesday.

Last week, the weather office had said that southwest monsoon was expected to reach Kerala by May 27, a good five days before the normal onset date of June 1, under the favourable weather conditions triggered by remnants of Cyclone Asani.

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Govt committed to farmers' welfare: CM

Rs 3,758 cr credited to farmers' accounts under 'Rythu Bharosa' scheme

PNS ■ GANAPAVARAM (ELURU DIST)

For the fourth year in a row, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has credited Rs 3,758 crore to the eligible farmer beneficiaries' accounts as the first tranche of 'YSR Rythu Bharosa', benefiting 50.10 lakh farmers.

Addressing the gathering here on Monday, the Chief Minister said that the government is committed to farmers' welfare and thus providing assistance through Rythu Bharosa even before Kharif starts. Under the first installment Rs 7,500 is being provided where the State government will be crediting Rs 5,500 on Monday and the remaining Rs 2,000 will be disbursed by the Centre under PM Kisaan by the end of May. Similarly in October at the time of harvest Rs 4,000 will be credited and in January during the Sankranti festival another Rs 2,000 will be credited into the farmers' accounts.

The Chief Minister said that so far through the 'Rythu Bharosa' scheme alone Rs 23,875 crore had been deposited directly in farmers' accounts and Rs 1,10,093 crore was spent for farmers' welfare through various schemes. Unlike the previous government which only spent Rs 782 crore on zero interest crop loans, he said that the State government had paid Rs 1282 crore for the zero-interest loans initiative. Recalling the farmer welfare schemes, he said that for the first time in the history of the country compensation for crop damage in any season was disbursed in the same season, standing by the farmers in tough times besides paying the



upto 10 acres in the aqua zone. He said that the government kept every promise made during elections and stated that he never thinks of politics before doing good for the people. "Since the government is implementing every scheme in a transparent manner, Pawan Kalyan, who took up 'Rythu Paramarsha Yatra', couldn't find a single farmer who was left out without providing compensation," said the Chief Minister and opined that to help farmers, one should have good awareness on agriculture and farmers plight. Pointing out Pawan Kalyan's rythu yatra, he questioned why Pawan didn't question Chandrababu Naidu in TDP's rule when the latter had failed to waive off crop loans and implement welfare schemes for the farmers. He said that neither the opposition TDP nor his allies had any moral right to speak for farmers' welfare. Ministers Kakani Govardan Reddy, Kottu Satyanarayana, K Nageswarao, P Viswaroop, Legislative Council Chairman Moshenraju, MLA Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas and other officials were present at the event.



insurance premium on behalf of the farmers. He said there was no need to declare a single mandal in the State as a drought-affected in the last three years, as every reservoir was full and the groundwater levels increased to a record level, where the production of food grains increased by 16 lakh tonnes. Also, the Chief Minister had announced to continue providing Rs 1.50 subsidy on power usage to all the small and marginal farmers cultivating in less than five acres and extended the subsidy to aqua farmers

614th birth anniversary fete of Annamacharya begins

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The 614th birth anniversary celebrations of saint poet Sri Tallapaka Annamacharya commenced in Tirupati on Monday. The artists of the Annamacharya Project presented Sathagiri Sankeertans while Sri Venkateswarulu Bhagavathar rendered Harikatha. At Mahathi also special programmes were organised for the occasion. "The Sankeertans penned by Sri Tallapaka Annamacharya were not only dedicated to Sri Venkateswara Swamy, but also enlightened society those days," said TTD CVSO Narasimha Kishore. The Chief Cop of TTD participated in the celebrations held at Mahathi Auditorium in Tirupati on Monday evening.

Phani Narayana of Hyderabad presented a vocal concert while students of SV College of Music and Dance, under the guidance of Sailaja, performed a dance ballet on Vengamamba's life. Annamacharya Project Director Dr A Vibhishana Sharma and Astana Vidwan of TTD Dr G Balakrishna Prasad were also present.



Swiggy delivery persons protest meagre pay

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Delivery persons of Swiggy staged a protest on Mahanadu Road in Vijayawada on Monday demanding better pay. They said that even after working hard for hours together, they were not paid at least Rs 500 per day and that Swiggy management was cheating them in the name of incentives.

Raising concern, the employees of delivery chain Swiggy in Vijayawada demanded that the management increase their basic pay per delivery of the order. They accused the company management of making them work more and pay less. They said that despite

working hard from morning till late night, it was very difficult to earn Rs 500 as the management was cheating them in the name of incentive. Though petrol prices rose to record highs in recent times, there has been no raise in their pay for the past two years.

The food delivery persons complained that incentives were being given only to those who delivered food on Sundays. Injustice was done to those who worked on weekdays.

They raised slogans against the management and said that despite their protest for two days the management did not care to resolve their justifiable demands.

Good response to GGMP: MLA Vishnu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Central MLA Malladi Vishnu has said that 95 per cent of the promises made in the election manifesto had been implemented by Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. As part of the government's Gadapa Gadapaku Mana Prabuthvam (GGMP) programme, the MLA, along with YSRCP division in-charge A Nageswara Rao and party activists, visited the residents of the 26th division in the 29th ward secretariat on Monday.

There are 917 houses within the secretariat and grievances were received from women, elderly people and students. There was good response to the programme from the public as many issues were resolved on the spot. The MLA said that the ben-



efits of welfare schemes were being provided to economically backward people without any bias. In the past three years, Rs 21 lakh was provided to the people under the 29th ward secretariat and all the eligible people were given house patts.

Vishnu alleged that Chandrababu Naidu and TDP leaders had filed PILs that delayed the construction of houses allotted to the poor in several areas, including Amaravati.

He clarified that if anyone eligible was excluded from welfare schemes, they would be included in June. So far, as many as 2,231 beneficiaries under the 29th ward secretariat have received Rs 21 lakh, of which 129 received YSR pension, 182 received benefits under Amma Vodi, 38 under Jagan Anna Vidya Deevana and Vasati Deevana, nine under EBC Nestam, 21 under Jagananna Thodu, 11 under Jagananna Chedodu, 45 under YSR Cheyuta, 20 under Kapu Nestam and three received benefits under Vahanamitra scheme.

Pattabhi Sitaramayya Knowledge Centre works to commence soon

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP MP from Machilipatnam Vallabhaneni Balashowry has said that Dr Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramayya Knowledge Centre would be constructed in Machilipatnam very soon. On Monday, the MP, along with bank officials and others, visited the site in Machilipatnam and said that the construction works of the knowledge centre would begin within a month. The MP thanked Chief

Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for allocating two acres of land, centrally located in the port city of Machilipatnam. He further thanked Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman for the support and Union Bank of India MD Raj Kiran for funding the construction of the knowledge centre.

The MP said that the Dr Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramayya Knowledge Centre would be constructed at an estimated cost of Rs 50 crore.

Naidu reviews arrangements for Mahanadu conclave

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

TDP national president and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday reviewed the arrangements being made for the party Mahanadu conclave to be held in Ongole in Prakasam district on May 27 and 28. Naidu asked the Mahanadu organising committees to reflect novelty and party ideological commitments in conducting the two-day conclave. A TDP statement here said that the party leaders resented the government's attitude in rejecting the Ongole mini-stadium to Mahanadu. As a result, the party has shifted the Mahanadu venue Throvagunta area in Manduvuri Palem revenue village limits. The venue is located closer to Ongole town.

The TDP leaders slammed the Government for not giving permission though the party had paid the required fee for Ongole stadium. They asked whether the mini-stadium was the ancestral property of the ruling YSRCP leaders.

The Telugu Desam leaders tried to take the Ongole mini-stadium as there was a likelihood of rains during the Mahanadu days. The government deliberately delayed its decision and finally rejected permission. The new Mahanadu venue is located near Brindavan function hall near Manduvuri Palem.

The TDP chief had asked the committees to ensure that Mahanadu 2022 should focus on the prevailing situation in the State and the future of the people.

18 booked for drunk driving sent to jail, fined

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As many as 18 persons who were booked for drunk driving were sent to jail by the Railway Magistrate on Monday. The Magistrate also imposed a fine of Rs 2,000 each on them. As per the instructions of Commissioner Kanti Rana Tata, a special drive was conducted by the city police in Vijayawada from May 13 to 15.

During the special drive, the traffic police registered cases against 18 persons for violating traffic rules and driving vehicles under the influence of alcohol at various places in the city.



On Monday, the 18 persons booked under drunk driving were produced before the court (Railway Magistrate). Of them,

one person was sent to jail for six days, four persons for five days, four persons for four days, one person for three days, four persons for two days and four persons for one day.

The Commissioner warned of stern action against those who violate traffic rules and said that most of the accidents were caused by those indulging in triple driving, driving without licence, reckless driving and over speed.

To prevent road accidents in the city, the police conducted a special drive on motor vehicle law violations and cases were booked.

DECLOGGING CANAL



An excavator being used for the removal of silt from Bandar Canal at Tadigadapa, near Vijayawada, on Monday. Pic by Ch Vijaya Bhaskar

RINL official Atul Bhatt wins 'Rajbhasha Nishta Samman'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

An RINL official was presented with the prestigious Rajbhasha Nishta Samman award. Ministry of Steel, Government of India has initiated one new award as 'Rajbhasha Nishta Samman' in the area of specific contribution to effective implementation of Official Language in PSUs under its administrative control.

Under this category, RINL Deputy General Manager (IT & ERP), Prabhakar Manohar Divecha, was awarded Shilid in Hindi Salahkar Samiti meeting held on May 13 at Gangtok, Sikkim. The award was received by RINL CMD, Atul Bhatt from the Union Minister of Steel. Atul Bhatt handed over this prestigious award to Divecha on Monday and congratulated him for his exemplary performance and for being the first recipient of this award from RINL.

Divecha was instrumental in bringing the Unicode concept to RINL in the year 2009 and since then he continued as a



regular Unicode Trainer to date and imparted training to RINL employees and also to the employees of member offices of TOLIC (Undertaking), Visakhapatnam. The Unicode concept in computer language means allotting specific code to each letter.

This is mainly to bring uniformity. Unicode compatible text or file can be opened easily in any part of the world thus forwarding font along with file is totally eliminated. He developed various IT modules for obtaining and processing Hindi Quarterly/Annual Reports etc.

Sir Arthur Cotton Award presented to Dr Enoch

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Noted preacher and president of JSSW Ministries Dr P Hanok has been honoured with the prestigious Sir Arthur Cotton Award. The award was handed over by Urban Bank Chairperson G Ramakrishna

Tulsi in Rajahmundry. A memento and a certificate of appreciation were also presented to him at a programme organised on the occasion of the 219th birth anniversary of Sir Arthur Cotton by the Philanthropic Society of India on Sunday.

Dr Enoch has been running medical camps for four decades, along with social service programmes for the welfare of lepers, the paralysed, the elderly, orphans, and fishermen. The missions provided free camps to train women in various household activities.



Lokesh asks CM to respond on 'deep agriculture' crisis

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

TDP national general secretary Nara Lokesh on Monday released a 17-point questionnaire, asking Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to respond on the 'deep agriculture crisis and the appalling conditions' of farmers' lives under his 3-year rule. Lokesh asked why Jagan Reddy tightened the noose around the necks of farmers by fixing meters on the agriculture motors in the State. The Chief Minister promised to bring a 'Rythu Rajyam' before the 2019 elections but now he was aiming at creating a State that would be devoid of farmers as a whole.

Nara Lokesh said that under the atrocious rule of Jagan Reddy, the farmers were facing a threat to their very existence, leave alone 'Rythu Rajyam'. The CM was not in a position to tell the people what he had done for meeting the growing irrigation needs of the farmers. Did his Government dig up a single minor canal in the past

three years? Can the CM answer this question?

Condemning the 'anti-farmer policies', Lokesh asked why not even a single minor irrigation project was constructed anywhere in the State. No justice was done to the farmers in any region. Why didn't the Government make payments towards paddy purchased from farmers last year? Did the present rulers make any effort to purchase paddy this year so as to ensure a better deal to the farmers?

The TDP MLC demanded the Chief Minister clarify what happened to the Rs. 3,500 Cr price stabilisation fund. Could the Jagan regime use this to ensure remunerative prices for the farmers? There were complaints about the absence of input subsidies to the farmers.

Nara Lokesh sought details of how much compensation was paid to the farmers for crop losses and damages in the cyclones and untimely rains. Why didn't farmers get insurance when the Government had paid crop insurance pre-

mium? At every turn, the YSRCP regime had betrayed the farmers.

Lokesh asked why the Chief Minister was giving just Rs. 7,500 Rythu Bharosa contrary to his promise of Rs. 12,500. Did this Government make any effort to identify the number of tenant farmers in the State? What happened to agriculture mechanisation, drip irrigation, and micronutrients? Why did this Chief Minister give support to the three 'anti-farmer bills' brought by the Centre?

The TDP MLC said the 'inefficient CM' had brought back crop holidays which Andhra Pradesh had done without a long time ago. The TDP gave Rs. 3 Lakh towards the 'Sunna Vaddi' programme but now just Rs. 1 Lakh was being given under the present regime. Who was responsible for AP standing in third place in farmers' suicides in the country? Was it not a fact that 8 farmers were shot dead at Mudigonda during Jagan Reddy's father's regime?

Six-member land grab gang held, fake documents seized

PNS ■ KADAPA

The Badvel Urban police arrested a six-member gang who were involved in land grabbing by using fake seals and documents.

Talking to the media here on Monday, Superintendent of Police KKN Anburajan said that by making fake documents the gang sold the same land to the gullible public. He said that land grabbing would be viewed seriously and stringent action would be taken against those who commit the offences of either government or private lands.

In the present case, the SP said, the land-grabbing racket was operating in Badvel, Gopavaram and surrounding mandals. On May 9, a complaint was received from the Tehsildar of Gopavaram man-



dal, that some people were making fake documents of government lands and resorting to land grabbing.

The police recovered from the gang flat seals pertaining to Badvel, Gopavaram, B.Kodur, Revenue Divisional Office, Rajampet, round seals, fake annexe forms, fake house pattas, fake certifi-

cates, fake DKT house pattas, empty annexe forms, fake passbooks, models of empty pass books, distribution registers pertaining to Gopavaram Tahsildar's Office, RSR, DKT files, Aadhar Cards photocopies, and empty land cess receipts, the SP informed.

The SP said that on May 16, at the market yard of Badvel Town, the culprits were arrested. Recently one land grabbing case was registered in Kadapa Taluk PS limits and the Preventive Detention Act will be invoked on the persons who were involved in that case", S.P Anburajan added. The arrested gang members were Bathina Ravishankar, Manyam Babu Rao, Dhara Ravikumar, Kolavali Venugopal, Gollapalli Pushparaju, and Punganuru Murali. Cases under various sections were registered against them, he added.

KKN Anburajan appreciated the efforts of Mydukur DSP S.R Vamsidhar Goud, Badvel Urban C.I G.Venkateswarlu, Sub-Inspectors K.Venkata Ramana, K.Srikanth, other police personnel in busing the racket.

Indoor events for children underscored

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Superintendent of Police Malika Garg personally oversaw the indoor events being conducted for the children of police personnel at the district police office as part of the Children Summer Sports and Games coaching camp organized by the district police department.

The SP interacted with the children and participated in the indoor events and appreciated their various drawings and small artifacts made by them. The SP asked the children about the various activities organized at the Summer Sports & Games Camp. Crayon sketching, hieroglyphics, cartoon picture drawing, clone with charts, guessing games of objects, telling inspiring stories of great leaders, etc. were held for children during today's indoor events.

On this occasion, the district SP said that the children are participating in the summer sports and games coaching camp with great enthusi-



asm and fun. "We are organizing these indoor events to inculcate competitiveness and creativity in the children and this camp will help in enhancing the personality development in the children" the SP said.

The SP said the police train children through the best experts in sports, art, painting, ethics & morals, communication skills, and more in this Summer Sports and Games Coaching Camp. The SP informed that more new pro-

grams will be organized for the children in the coming days.

SP was accompanied by Additional SP (Admin) K. Nageshwara Rao, DSB DSP B. Mariyadas, AR DSP Raghavendra, RI Srihari Reddy, and others.

Kin of deceased boy seek justice, stage dharna

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 10-year-old boy Manoj had drowned in a swimming pool at Samathapuri Colony in Nagole under Chaitanyapuri police station limits on Sunday. Following this, the parents and other family members of the boy staged dharna at the swimming pool on Monday seeking justice.

They alleged that the boy had died due to negligence by the organisers of swimming pool. Either GHMC officials,

government officials or any political leader did not visit the family so far. Nor the swimming pool was seized, they said.

The family members alleged that rich people are treated in a better way where as poor people are ignored.

The family members seek action against swimming pool organizer Ashok Goud and others as they are negligent in maintaining the swimming pool which lead to the death of the boy.



Mahanadu at Throvagunta in Prakasam on May 27 & 28

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) has decided to organise its two-day annual conclave Mahanadu at Throvagunta village near here on May 27 and 28.

The Telugu Desam party high command led by N Chandrababu Naidu had finalized the venue for Mahanadu, TDP senior leader ZP former chairman Dr.Nukasani Balaji told the media here on Monday.

Balaji said that the TDP high command decided to organise the Mahanadu at Throvagunta village in the Manduvaripalem revenue division. He said that though the TDP applied for the govern-

ment stadium but the official did not grant permission. Despite the TDP offering to pay the needed fee for the stadium the officials did not give permission.

Nukasani Balaji said that the works had begun for making arrangements for Mahanadu at Throvagunta village. The Mahanadu is like a big festival to the TDP cadre and all arrangements are being made in a big way to organise the Mahanadu in a grand manner, he said. Nukasani Balaji said that the Telugu Desam Party would continue to give political priority to the weaker sections. The late N. Rama Rao gave priority to the weaker sections and

the present party leader Nara Chandrababu Naidu is continuing the same, he claimed.

The TDP senior leader criticized Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for setting up BC federations that were not financially self-sufficient. He said that the Telugu Desam Party should come to power so that the children of the weaker sections can get higher education or go abroad for education.

The people should vote out the YSRCP which is giving trouble to the people by hiking electric tariffs, bus fares, and petrol and diesel prices besides implementing uncheduled power cuts.

5 killed in two road accidents

PNS ■ KADAPA

Five persons were killed in two road accidents in Annamayya district on Monday evening.

Police said that three persons including two children were killed when a lorry knocked down their motorcycle at Munugode village in Kurabalakota manal.

The deceased Khadar Basha, Junodh (7), and Joya (10) were killed on the spot and Habeera was critically injured when their bike was knocked down by a speeding lorry. Habeera was admitted to the government general hospital in Madanapalli.

In another accident, which took place at Cherlopalli village opposite MLL hospital, two persons were killed when they fell down from their motorcycle. The deceased were identified as Satish Kumar and Hemanth. They tried to avoid hitting an auto-rickshaw, lost balance, and fell down from the bike.



260 kidney transplants performed at NRI Hospital

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The NRI Hospital has performed 260 kidney transplantation operations since 2012. The NRI hospital organised a workshop on organ donations in the hospital here on Monday which the minister for Health Vidadala Rajani inaugurated.

The hospital doctors said that using the latest and modern medical equipment, the NRI hospital is transplanting kidneys, livers and hearts.

The doctors said that the NRI hospital is affordable to the common man and its medical services are available

24 x 7. He said that organ transplantation gives a new lease of life to the victims, the doctor said. The government of Andhra Pradesh has given needed permission to the NRI general and super-specialty hospital to carry out organ transplantation operations.

"We are organising a programme to create awareness among people on organ donations and transplantations. "The NRI hospital is organising a training programme from May 16 to May 20 with the cooperation of Jeevandan trust on 'Transplantation Coordinators Certificate course,' the doctors said.

SHORT TAKES

One killed in bee attack on NREGA workers

KAKINADA: One National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) worker was killed and five others were injured when honey bees attacked them while they were working at Pandalapuru village in Nidadavole mandal on Monday. According to the official sources, when the NREGA workers were working in a field, the swarm attacked them suddenly. The panicked workers ran helter-skelter to save themselves from the swarm. However, the deceased Veligete Ganniyya, an elderly person, could not run, resulting in the bees stinging him, and killing him instantly. Five persons were injured in the bee attack and they were admitted to the government hospital in Nidadavolu where they were undergoing treatment.

Father-son duo dead as bullock-cart falls into well

NARASARAOPET: A man and his son were killed when the bullock cart on which they were returning home from their agricultural field, fell into a well at Gangireddypalem village in Nacharam mandal on Monday. Police said that the deceased Madhira Nagaraju (33) and his son Sharan (9) went to their agriculture field. When they were going home on a bullock cart it fell into the agriculture well. The two bulls also died in the mishap. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the Government General Hospital in Guntur.

Two engineering students drown at sea in Prakasam

ONGOLE: Two engineering students drowned in the sea at Ramapuram village in Vetapalem mandal on Monday. Marine police ASI Rambabu told the media that six engineering students of Saint Ann's College of Engineering went to the sea for a picnic party. Three of the students went to a hotel to bring biryani and the other three ventured into the sea for a swim. However, two of them were washed away in a massive wave and one student came ashore safely. The students who washed away were identified as Durga Bhavani and Sayyad Jilani. The police pressed expert swimmers into service to trace the bodies.



Smugglers drive SUV into tank to evade cops

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

In a cinema-style incident, the ganja smugglers drove a Scorpio vehicle into a reservoir to avoid being arrested by police near Bhupathipalem at Maredumilli and Rampachodavaram division in the ASR district. Police said that they conducted a checking of vehicles at Maredumilli. At the same time, the police saw a Scorpio vehicle coming toward them at high speed and they stopped the vehicle. But the smugglers did not stop the vehicle and continued to go at high speed. The police chased the vehicle.

Noticing that the police were chasing them and to avoid arrest, the ganja smugglers drove the Scorpio into the Bhupathipalem Reservoir. Later the ganja smugglers fled the scene leaving the ganja in the SUV itself. The police seized 300 KG of cannabis from the vehicle which was half-submerged in the reservoir. The entire episode resembled a scene in the recently released super hit film on red sander smuggling 'Pushpa' in which the hero, a red sander smuggler, drove a lorry into abandoned agriculture well to avoid the police arresting him.

Land sought for Buddha Vihar

PNS ■ ELURU

Buddhist Monk Sumedha Bhodhi called on Home Minister Taneti Vanitha and appealed to her for land for the construction of Buddha Vihar and cottage to spread the message of Gautama Buddha.

The Buddhist Monk met the Home Minister in her camp office in Kovvur on Monday. He appealed to her for the allocation of three acres of land

either in Kovvur or at Dowleswaram for the construction of Buddha Vihar and cottage to spread the preaching and messages of Gautham Buddha. Speaking on this occasion, the Home Minister said that Buddhism is providing guidance to all communities in the world to coexist peacefully. It is closely related to the teachings of Buddha and the teachings of Hinduism. She said that the teachings

of the Buddha not only enlighten the practitioner but also contribute to the development of virtues such as humanity and kindness in society and contribute to peaceful coexistence. Monk Sumedha Bodhi said that nowadays revolutionary changes need to be adopted in religious practices. The Buddhist philosophy reforms those who are going on the wrong path, he claimed.



Absconding cashier surrenders in court

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a dramatic turn of events in bank theft case, Praveen Kumar, the cashier who allegedly disappeared with Rs.22.53 lakh last week, surrendered before a court in Hayathnagar on Monday. He was later remanded to judicial custody and subsequently shifted to the Central prison in Cherlapally. Praveen Kumar had left the Vanasthalipuram bank with the cash on May 10 and was absconding since then. He left the bank by taking permission from the chief manager stating that he was going out to buy medicines for stomach pain. As he did not return and the cash was found missing, bank officials lodged a complaint with the Vanasthalipuram police, who booked a case against Praveen Kumar and took up investigation.

Prakasam Collector launches dengue awareness drive

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam District Collector A S Dinesh Kumar said that an awareness programme is being held in the district to sensitize people on how to eradicate the dengue fever and urged the cooperation of people to prevent dengue. The District Collector said that everyone in the district should play their part in the prevention of dengue. The Collector inaugurated an awareness stall set up at the

Collectorate on Monday to mark 'National Dengue Prevention' Day. Subsequently, a human chain was formed. The Collector directed the authorities to take steps for the prevention of dengue.

Speaking on this occasion, the Collector said that awareness programs are being conducted with the theme 'Let's join hands - Let's prevent dengue.' He called on the people to see to it that water is not stored in houses and surrounding areas. The Collector

called for the observance of 'Dry Day' every Friday and asked people to make sure that water is not stored in tires, coconut shells and sewers. The Collector asked people to put lids on the water tanks and use mosquito nets.

Dinesh Kumar said that the number of dengue cases had come down due to the measures taken by the district administration. "Awareness measures have been taken to significantly curb dengue. District officials were ordered

to take these to the public. Dengue can be prevented with the participation of the people" the Collector said. The Collector unveiled pamphlets designed in this direction.

Joint Collector Abhishek Kishore, DRO Srinivasulu, District Malaria Officer Gnaneshwari, DMHO Suresh Kumar, D.C.H.S. Usha, DPO Narayana Reddy, Zilla Parishad CEO Jali Reddy Ongole Municipal Commissioner Bhagyalakshmi and several district officials were present.



INDIA CORNER

K'taka Minister justifies inclusion of speech by RSS founder in textbook

Karnataka Primary and Secondary Education Minister B C Nagesh has defended the inclusion of a speech by founder of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in a revised Kannada textbook for students of class X. This was objected to by some organisations, including All-India Democratic Students Organisation (AIDSO) and All-India Save Education Committee (AISEC). Nagesh said the textbook does not contain anything about Hedgewar or RSS, but only his speech on what should be an inspiration to people, especially the youth, and that those who have raised objections have not gone through the textbook. "Some people want to object to everything and they feel what they have said is only the truth and only their thinking has to be told to society...In that speech, Hedgewar had said that one has to take ideology, values and principles as his or her inspiration."



Mumbai police register over 12,000 cases for wrong-side driving in 2 months

The Mumbai police have in last two months registered 12,390 cases for wrong-side driving and also removed 13,430 abandoned vehicles from streets, an official said on Monday. Also, there were 18 cases of gutka seizure worth over Rs 80 lakh last week, while drugs worth over Rs 30 lakh were also seized in 21 cases in a drive conducted last week, Mumbai Police Commissioner Sanjay Pandey, said in a Twitter post. Pandey, who was appointed as the city police chief in February, also informed that there have been 4,214 cases of riding two-wheelers without helmet in the last couple of months. Some builders not following the noise pollution norms were booked in Santacruz and other areas of the city, he said. In the Antop Hill area, the police were initiating action to cancel a bond taken from a builder for not following the noise pollution rules, he said.



Think out of the box, innovate, Union Minister Goyal tells students

Union Minister Piyush Goyal on Monday urged students to think out of the box, innovate to find solutions and contribute to nation-building. Speaking at the 23th convocation of Bharti Vidyapeeth University here, Goyal also said well-educated persons are needed in politics to transform it. "The doors are open to a new idea, to entrepreneurship, so think out of the box and do not go down the beaten path. Not that we do not want you to get good jobs, and become government officials, but do not necessarily look at the safety and comfort of a cozy job...experiment...this is the time, you can do it," the Union Commerce and Industry minister said. He said failure is a stepping stone to success and urged students to look for opportunities in the fields of sustainability, challenges of climate change, and taking water to every household in the country.



India-Nepal's ever-strengthening friendship will benefit humanity: PM

PNS ■ LUMBINI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday that India and Nepal's ever-strengthening friendship and their closeness will benefit the entire humanity in the emerging global situation as he likened the ties between the two neighbours as unshakable like the Himalayas. Modi, who visited the Himalayan nation at the invitation of his Nepalese counterpart Sher Bahadur Deuba on a day-long visit to Lumbini on the occasion of Buddha Purnima, made the remarks while addressing the International Buddhist Conference here. "India and Nepal's ever-strengthening friendship and our closeness will benefit the entire humanity in the kind of global conditions that are emerging," Modi said in his 20-minute special address.



Prime Minister Modi, who attended the 2566th Buddha Jayanti Celebration at International Convention Center and Meditation Hall at Lumbini, was accompanied by his Nepalese counterpart Deuba and his spouse Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba. Several Nepalese ministers were among the other dignitaries present.

Modi said that India and Nepal relations are unshakable like the Himalayas and added that both the countries will work towards solving global problems with Buddha's ideologies. "Buddha is the embodiment of the collective understanding of humanity," Modi told the gathering of some 2,500 people that included monks, Buddhist scholars and international participants in Lumbini. Lumbini, located in the Terai plains of southern Nepal, is one of the holiest places of Buddhism, as Lord Buddha was born there. Modi said the energy of the place where Lord Buddha was born, gives him a different feeling. "I was happy to see that the Mahabodhi sapling I had gifted in 2014 for this place, is now growing into a tree," he added. "From Sarnath, Bodhi Gaya and Kushinagar in India to Lumbini in Nepal, this holy place is a symbol of our common heritage and shared values. We have to develop this heritage together and enrich it further," Modi said. He said the construction of the Lumbini Museum in Nepal is also an example of joint cooperation between the two countries. He said it was decided to

establish Dr Ambedkar Chair for Buddhist Studies in Lumbini Buddhist University. Modi said the place where he was born, Vadnagar in Gujarat, was a great center for Buddhist learning centuries ago. "Even today ancient relics are coming out there, and the conservation work for them is ongoing," he added. "In Janakpur, I had said that Our Ram is also incomplete without Nepal. I know that today when a grand temple of Lord Shri Ram is being built in India, the people of Nepal are equally happy," Modi said. "On his part, Nepalese Prime Minister Deuba described India as a 'close neighbour and a trusted friend.'" Deuba said he had a "fruitful discussion" with Prime Minister Modi earlier and he was looking forward for developing Bodhi Circuit involving Bodhi Gaya, Sarnath and Kushinagar in India.

BJP works to create divide, Cong to connect with all: Rahul

PNS ■ BANSWARA

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday accused the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of trying to create two Hindustans, one for the rich and the other for the poor. Addressing a rally here, he also lashed out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the state of the economy, accusing him of destroying the economy which was "strengthened" by the former UPA government. The Congress, he said, works to connect with all while the BJP works to create a divide. The BJP and Modi want to create two Hindustans, one for the rich and select two-three industrialists, and the other of Dalits, farmers, the poor and underprivileged while the Congress wants only one Hindustan, he said, adding, "This is the fight in the country". The Congress leader said there is a fight between two



ideologies in the country. The Congress says that we have to move forward while connecting with all, respect and protect the culture of all. The BJP works to divide, 'crush' and 'suppress'. (BJP) works to remove history and culture of tribals, he said in the tribal dominated area of southern Rajasthan. We work to connect while they work to divide. We help the weaker and they help selected top industrialists, he said. The Congress leader, who has been targeting the govern-

ment over the state of the economy and issue of unemployment, said, "The BJP government has attacked our economy. PM did demonetisation, wrongly implemented GST due to which the economy got destroyed. UPA worked to strengthen the economy but Narendra Modi caused harm to our economy". Every youth knows that they cannot get jobs in Hindustan today. Inflation is increasing, he said. Gandhi said the Centre brought three laws against farmers which had to be withdrawn after protests and charged that two-three select industrialists were supposed to get full advantage of the laws. Noting that there is a very old and deep relation of the Congress with tribals, he said, "We protect your history, we don't want to suppress or delete your history. When we had the UPA government at the Centre, we had brought historic laws to protect the forest and water of tribals".

NO TIME TO GRIEVE Women survivors worried about livelihood, future

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

"It is like a video continuously playing in my head and I can still hear screams of people begging for help," says 45-year-old Mamta, one of the survivors of the Mundka fire tragedy. However, she has no time to grieve as another pressing worry on her mind is to feed her family of nine who are entirely dependent on her. Mamta suffered burns on her hands and injuries on her foot and has been asked to take rest until recovery. Last Friday, a massive fire engulfed the four-story building where Mamta had been working for years. Many of her co-workers died or are unaccounted for till now. At least, 27 people, including 21 women, died in the blaze that started on the first floor of building. "It is like a video continuously playing in my head. I still hear screams and people begging for help. I could still feel that smoke. My friend Geeta was standing there, but she couldn't move. "We asked her to take the



rope and come down. But she could not. I don't know what happened to her. I cannot forget what happened that day," Mamta, a resident of Parvesh Nagar, situated in west Delhi's Mubarakpur near Mundka. However, her major concern is feeding her hungry kids. "My husband is handicapped. I have seven kids, including five daughters. My sons work as well as study. They are daily wagers and most of the time are without work. "I was the only stable earning member of the family. Now I am sitting at home without work. How will I feed my family?" rued Mamta, who worked in the CCTV cameras and router manufacturing company in the building.

Nobody will tolerate 63 lakhs people being rendered homeless: Kejriwal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Claiming that the ongoing anti-encroachment drive in Delhi will render 63 lakh people homeless, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Monday said it will be the "biggest destruction" in Independent India, and accused the BJP of misusing power. He also questioned the moral, constitutional and legal authority of the BJP-ruled civic bodies to launch such a large-scale drive at the fag end of their terms. "Delhi has not developed as a planned city. More than 80 per cent of Delhi can be called illegal and encroached upon. Does that mean you will destroy 80 per cent of Delhi?" he asked.



In a virtual address after holding a meeting with AAP MLAs on the issue, he demanded the deferred municipal corporation polls be held now to elect new civic bodies that can take a decision on the matter. "You will make 63 lakh people homeless and spoil their daily lives by bulldozing their houses and shops. It will be the

biggest destruction in independent India. Nobody is going to tolerate it," the AAP national convener said, attacking the BJP. "Now when just two days are left before your (BJP-ruled civic bodies) term ends, do you have any moral, legal and constitutional power to take such a big decision? Conduct the elections. Let the new MCD (civic bodies) take decisions after the elections," he added. Exuding confidence in his party winning the polls, Kejriwal promised the AAP will solve the problem of illegal construction and encroachments in Delhi after coming at helm of affairs in the city's municipal corporations and make Delhi "better and beautiful".

TARGETED KILLING OF KASHMIRI PANDITS Non-locals aimed to keep terrorism alive: Army

PNS ■ JAMMU

Northern Army commander Lieutenant General Upendra Dwivedi on Monday said the targeted killings of Kashmiri Pandits and non-local labourers by militants was to keep terrorism alive in Kashmir. He also said Pakistan created a facade of proxy tanzeems (outfits) to give an indigenous colour to the insurgency in the Valley after the country faced pressure internationally to stop sponsoring terror activities in Jammu and Kashmir. Terror organisations like The Resistance Front (TRF), Peoples' Anti-Fascist Front (PAFF), Gaznavi Force, United Liberation Front,

Geelani Force, Lashkar-e-Mustafa, Lashar-e-Islam and Kashmir Freedom Fighter have been claiming responsibility for terror attacks, particularly selective killings of Hindus in the valley, during the last one-and-a-half-year, as per the reports. "Due to active diplomacy, there has been tremendous international pressure on Pakistan to put a stop to sponsoring terror in J-K. Consequently, a facade of proxy tanzeems was created to give an indigenous hue (to militancy in Kashmir)," Lt Gen Dwivedi, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Northern Command, said in an interview to PTI.

Two quakes rock Assam, Meghalaya

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Two earthquakes of 3.9 magnitude each hit Meghalaya and Assam in less than 24 hours, official reports said on Monday. The first quake, recorded at 9.47 pm on Sunday, had its epicentre in Nongpoh area of Meghalaya at a depth of 12 km, the second in Nagaon of Assam at a depth of 55 km. According to the reports, tremors were felt in parts of central and northern Assam after the second quake jolted the state at 3.22 pm on Monday. No report of loss of life or damage to property has been received in either of the quake, officials said. The northeastern part of the country falls in high seismic zone, making earthquakes a frequent phenomenon in the region. A 6.4-magnitude quake had shaken Assam and parts of North East on April 28 in 2021, making it one of the most severe ones to shake the region in recent years.

'Shivling found': Court order sealing of spot

Gyanvapi mosque panel disputes the claim

PNS ■ VARANASI

A local court here directed the district administration to seal a spot in the Gyanvapi Masjid complex after counsels representing the Hindu petitioners said a Shivling was found Monday during a court-mandated videography survey. A mosque management committee spokesperson disputed the claim, telling a television channel that the object was part of a fountain. He said lawyers representing the mosque committee were not fully heard before the sealing order was announced. The Hindu side claimed that the Shivling was found close to the wazookhana -- a small

reservoir used by Muslim devotees to perform ritual ablutions before offering the namaz. The claimed finding on the last day of the survey reignited the mandir-masjid debate over the Gyanvapi mosque-Shringar Gauri complex located close to the iconic Kashi Vishwanath temple. Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya expressed satisfaction over the development while AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi said Muslims are not prepared to lose another mosque after the Babri Masjid. Civil Judge (Senior Division) Ravi Kumar Diwakar issued directions on sealing an area of

the mosque on an appeal by the lawyers representing the Hindu petitioners. Along with the counsels representing the mosque management committee, they had accompanied the team conducting the survey, headed by a court-appointed advocate commissioner. The judge directed the district magistrate, police commissioner and CRPF commandant in Varanasi to ensure the security of the sealed area. The local court is hearing a plea by a group of women seeking permission for daily prayers before the idols on the mosque's outer walls. The survey was ordered during this hearing and was initial-



ly stalled by the mosque management, alleging that the commissioner assigned to the task was biased. Monday's survey of the mosque complex started at 8 am and ended around 10.15 am. All parties were satisfied with the work," Varanasi District Magistrate Kaushal

Raj Sharma told reporters. He said the next order of the court will be known only on Tuesday, the deadline set by it for the advocate commissioner to submit the survey report. Till then nobody should disclose what has been found inside the court complex, the DM said.

BODIES FLOATING ON GANGA

UP, Bihar asked inform number of human corpses found in river

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has directed the Uttar Pradesh and Bihar governments to inform it about the number of human corpses found floating in the river Ganga besides bodies buried on the river bed in the two states before the onset of COVID-19 till March 31 this year. A bench of Justices Arun Kumar Tyagi and expert member Dr. Afroz Ahmad directed the Additional Chief Secretary (Home) and Additional Chief Secretary/Principal Secretary (Health), Governments of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar respectively to submit factual



verification reports on the issue. "How many dead bodies were documented/found to have been floating in river Ganga and (b) to have been buried on the river bed in the States of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar before COVID-19 in the years 2018 and 2019 and after Covid 19 in the years 2020, 2021 and till 31.03.2022?"

"In how many cases financial support was extended by the Governments of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar respectively for cremation, funeral, or burial of the dead bodies? What steps were taken for creating public awareness and promoting public participation for preventing floating of dead bodies in river Ganga or their burial in or near the river bed?" the bench asked. The tribunal sought to know whether any criminal case was registered and any prosecution was launched against any person for violation of the guidelines for the management of dead bodies covid infected or otherwise.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

India's model

The number of the so-called 'neutral' countries across the globe is shrinking

Russia attacked Ukraine and the world is topsy-turvy since then. Grounded political theories of how nations conduct and secure themselves are going for a toss. By the time the conflict concludes, the world may see the emergence of refurbished systems of how nations, as individuals or groups, behave with one another. The conflict drew the world's attention to India and its stand on not condemning Russia. For weeks, the West pressured India to change its stand by offering both sops and veiled threats. India did not budge from its stand. It abstained from voting on the United Nations resolutions condemning Russia. At the same time, it defended Ukraine's sovereignty and its right to territorial integrity. It sent, and continues to send, medical and other aid to that country. Reams were written trying to understand how India backed its longstanding friendship with Russia while it simultaneously associated with the US at the QUAD, tolerated China in BRICS, and thanked Europe for an invite as a guest at the G-7 Summit. It is said that India has shifted from its Nehruvian stance of non-alignment to the present multi-alignment model. The latest country to change its national status is Finland, followed by Sweden. Determined neutrals for decades, they now want to join NATO because Russia makes them insecure. Their presence bolsters NATO and, by extension, the US. But we are not going into that. Finland shares a long border with Russia and a



messy past with the former communist country.

To that extent, the Ukraine invasion may be seen as a valid reason for Finland to dump its neutrality. With Finland and Sweden ready to join NATO, the number of Europe's neutrals has shrunk. Other countries are also reviewing their neutral status. Switzerland, Europe's most famous neutral, wonders how it can call itself neutral when it has backed European Union sanctions on Russia. Its shrinking neutrality will churn European politics in the coming days. Ireland has backed sanctions on Russia but is militarily neutral, sending only non-weaponry aid to Ukraine. Malta, Austria and Cyprus are still assessing their neutrality. Europe first saw the link between politics and economics and that led to its awareness that military alliances like NATO can achieve collective security. Not all neutrals appreciated this concept. Some refused to join the European Economic Community as that would weaken their neutral status. Ireland joined, arguing that the resultant economic prosperity was no threat to its neutrality. Spain joined both NATO and EEC believing the two were inseparable and that it was worth paying the political price of joining NATO to encash the EEC's economic benefits. However, the then Soviet threat never influenced their decisions. Ireland at present. In Finland's case, more than the Russian threat, the concerns are also about its ageing population and the pressures of maintaining its welfare State model in the face of undulating export figures. Will joining NATO resolve Finland's non-security problems? Time will tell.

PICTALK



Devotees celebrate 'Buddha Purnima', at Har Ki Pauri in Haridwar

PM's visit to renew the cultural bond

PM Modi's ongoing visit to Nepal signifies a turning point in bilateral relations as it aims to boost shared cultural heritage amid the peoples



RISHI GUPTA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on a four-day visit to Nepal in the middle of this month to mark the birth anniversary of Bhagwan Buddha at His birthplace in Lumbini, Nepal. Modi's travel plan included flying by helicopter to Lumbini in Nepal from the recently inaugurated Kushinagar International Airport in Uttar Pradesh. The Prime Minister's helicopter ride will mark an important event in the history of shared Buddhist heritage between the two countries. Modi's visit to Nepal comes in the backdrop of the recently concluded visit of Nepalese Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba to India in April.



It is noteworthy that Lord Buddha was born in Lumbini, Nepal, and he achieved Mahanirvana in Kushinagar, India. And Prime Minister Modi's visit signifies the efforts made to promote religious tourism and connectivity between India and Nepal. Hence, the trip is important from the socio-cultural, religious, economic and connectivity perspectives. It is Prime Minister Modi's first visit to Nepal since his re-election in May 2019 and the fifth such trip in the last eight years where Nepalese Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba will welcome him. The bilateral talks between the two Prime Ministers will provide a big push to India's 'Neighborhood First Policy' as well as the agreements that were signed during PM Deuba's visit to Delhi in April.

Rejuvenating Cultural Bond: In recent years, strategic discussions around India-Nepal relations have been suggestive of building bilateral ties based on economic and development cooperation instead of focusing more on the cultural and Roti-Beti narrative. There is also a sense among the Nepalese observers that mainstream issues often get ignored behind the veil of Roti-Beti ties. As a result, economic ties must be prioritised to facilitate shared development. Such discussions had become more prominent in the light of economic disruptions at the India-Nepal border in 2015. However, contrary to these

observations on India's Nepal policy, observers find China's newfound love for cultural diplomacy with Nepal an impactful initiative.

It is also noteworthy that China is leaving no stone unturned to bring socio-cultural and religious elements in creating a cultural narrative around its ties with Nepal. While China inherited most of its socio-cultural and religious connections with Nepal after annexing Tibet in 1950, such bonds between Nepal and India have been ancient, effortless and natural. Also, the rise of the Chinese footprint in Nepal had led to a sudden downturn in India-Nepal relations. However, the people-to-people ties and the cultural exchanges were always firm.

China had overtaken the top spot in Foreign Direct Investment in Nepal in mid-2014, followed by the signing of the Belt and Road Initiative by Nepal in May 2017. However, within seven years, the China bubble has burst, considering no progress made on the agreements signed under the much-hyped Belt and Road Initiative.

In this light, Prime Minister Modi's visit to Lumbini where he is slated to visit the sacred Mayadevi temple to offer prayers and lay the foundation of a Centre for



ECONOMIC TIES BETWEEN THE COUNTRIES MUST BE PRIORITISED TO FACILITATE SHARED DEVELOPMENT. SUCH DISCUSSIONS HAD BECOME MORE PROMINENT IN THE LIGHT OF ECONOMIC DISRUPTIONS AT THE INDIA-NEPAL BORDER IN 2015

Buddhist culture and heritage within the Lumbini Monastic Zone rejuvenates the Buddhist connection between India and Nepal. This bond is visible from the lakhs of Nepalese tourists visiting Buddhist sites in India, including Kushinagar, Bodhi Gaya and Sarnath, and they also visit famous Hindu temples and go to Banaras to perform prayers for their ancestors. Similarly, Indian tourists visit Nepal in huge numbers every year to visit Pashupatinath and other sacred sites. Therefore, Prime Minister Modi's visit is a welcome step in rejuvenating the cultural connection.

News vistas: From day one in office, PM Modi has emphasised putting 'Neighborhood First' and his early trips to Bhutan and Nepal are testimonies in this regard. In pursuing these foreign policy goals, India has struck a fine balance between ancient ties and present needs. While the current visit rejuvenates ancient cultural bonds, Nepalese Prime Minister Deuba's visit to Delhi in April focused on the potential in two areas of cooperation.

Connectivity is on the top priority which includes improved cross-border land connectivity, modernisation of transit points for the import of goods from third countries to Nepal through Indian ports,

and expanding railway connectivity to all important regions of Nepal from India. Second, the release of the Vision Statement on the Power Sector in April was among the most awaited diplomatic declarations. Nepal holding huge hydropower potential and India as a leading technical expert in the field, make the two countries 'natural' partners in mutual progress and growth. Also, India is a reliable market for Nepal to export excess power to India and other neighboring countries.

Hence, the hydropower cooperation is a win-win deal for the two countries.

Conclusion: After a strained period of seven years, the India-Nepal ties are moving towards normalcy. The recent high-level exchanges between the countries indicate a bonhomie based on the fundamentals of shared ancient socio-cultural, religious, philosophical and historical heritage. At the same time, these exchanges are in sync with the prospects and potential development cooperation.

(This is the concluding instalment of a two-part series on Indo-Nepal relations.)

(The author is a Research Associate with the Vivekananda International Foundation. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PROTECTION FOR GYANVAPI SHIVLING

Sir — Glad to read that the Varanasi court has issued an urgent order regarding the Gyanvapi survey that a section of the Gyanvapi mosque will be sealed off for now for the protection of the Shivling that has been discovered on the property and that no unauthorised person will be allowed to enter the sealed portion of the mosque. The court has ordered that only authorised personnel should be deployed near the sealed area of the mosque to ensure that nobody else enters the area. The District Magistrate, Commissioner and CRPF commandant will be deployed to ensure the "safety of the Shivling".

This order was passed soon after the videography survey of the Gyanvapi mosque was completed, when the petitioner submitted that a Shivling was found inside the well of the masjid. The court, thereafter, ordered the sealing of the area for further investigation. The exercise was conducted in accordance with the Varanasi Civil Court's order to continue the survey despite objections from the mosque authorities. The Muslim community had raised a lot of protests against the video survey, but their demands were dismissed. Tension continues to prevail in the area and the local residents are living under the shadow of fear.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

'NOW OR NEVER' APPROACH WITH PAK

Sir — The nation needs to be united in the face of the onslaught by certain fissiparous tendencies. We will have to emerge out of the prevailing narratives of majoritarianism and minorities. The Right, Left or Centralist idealism or ideological thinking will not bear any result except self-destruction. We will have to think and profess only as Indians, and nothing less or else, if we all want to survive and thrive. Narrow, parochial approaches have to be abandoned. The killing of Kashmiri Pandits shows that a lot more needs to be done to establish

A red-letter day for Indian sports



On May 15, 2022, the high-flying Indian badminton team did what had never happened in the history of the Thomas Cup. We will never forget Bangkok where India overwhelmed Indonesia, a 14-time champion and six-time runners up, 3-0 in their maiden final appearance. India have, however, won the bronze medal in 1952, 1955 and 1979. A Thomas Cup win is something one can only

dream about (it is akin to the Davis Cup in lawn tennis) and to win it so decisively is a great feat. One hopes that it becomes a watershed moment in Indian badminton the same way the 1983 World Cup victory was for cricket. It is a milestone set by this Indian team, where each of the players had their own value.

Lakshya Sen, the star player, lost to a higher ranker in the quarters and semis but made a great comeback in the final, to rally from a set down to beat Anthony Ginting 7-21, 21-17, 21-16. Kidambi Srikanth stood like a wall in all matches — quarterfinals, semis and then the final, playing the match of his lifetime. Equally importantly, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty pair again and again, proving why they are among the top 10. With this victory, India has become only the sixth country after China, Indonesia, Japan, Denmark and Malaysia to win the Thomas Cup. **Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad**

peace in Jammu and Kashmir.

There is also the need for a dialogue with Pakistan on the lines of the Simla Agreement. Recently, we have lost one more Hindu Pandit to the bullets of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. Only when terrorism stops can India engage with Pakistan. Looking at the state of affairs in Pakistan, India has nothing to gain from them. We have waited for so long and, with the new Ministry in place there, we can give it one more try. If our move doesn't yield results, then attack is the best form of defence.

Nikhil Krishnan | Trichy

THE THREAT OF FREQUENT HEATWAVES

Sir — A punishing heatwave has gripped India. What is the most alarming feature of this heatwave is that the effects of global warming have pushed India and its neighbouring countries to the levels where the climate is becoming a core threat to human health ('Dealing with impact of heatwaves in India', May 13).

Heatwaves around the world have become frequently common and hotter because of climate change, according to Friederike Otto, a Climatologist at the University of Oxford. Ms Otto adds that the heatwaves will continue to get hotter and fiercer until humans stop burning fossil fuels.

Experts say that before climate change became the norm, such intensity of heat would have been noticed about only once in about every 50 years in India. However, it is now expected to occur once every four years. The heatwaves have led to cascading impacts not just on human health, but also on ecosystems like agriculture, water and energy supplies. Experts say that climate change can definitely be controlled, which will involve a substantial reduction in fossil fuel use, widespread electrification, improved energy efficiency and use of alternative fuels such as hydrogen.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

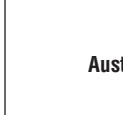
SOUND BITE

We will continue to work for the development of the State as per the PM's guidelines.



Tripura Chief Minister
— Manik Saha

Not everything went to plan during our pandemic response.



Australia Prime Minister
— Scott Morrison

The road to people's heart is unending (on daughter Suhana's acting debut).



Actor
— Shah Rukh Khan

As far as the world of sports goes in India, this is it.



Chief national coach
— Pullela Gopichand

I will not stop until I pull down your (Uddhav's) Babri-like edifice of power.



Maharashtra ex-CM
— Devendra Fadnis

Head held high

India's historic Thomas Cup win will go a long way in promoting other sports, too

In what's nothing short of a stupendous achievement for India in the annals of global sporting events, our badminton players turned the final match at the Thomas Cup finals into a game of 'goodminton' for the population of the entire country. On the sheer scale of matting the odds, displaying the grit, and living through the proverbial blood, sweat and tears, our players were not one iota less heroic than the iconic 1983 Cricket World Cup-winning team. What makes this historic victory sweeter — only five countries have so far won the prestigious trophy in the tournament's 73-year history since it came into existence, and it was India's maiden appearance in the tournament's finals — is that it was clinched against an opponent as formidable as Indonesia, which is a 14-time champion and six-time runners up, and the latter was beaten comprehensively by a 3-0 margin. In the past, though, India did manage to lay its hands on the bronze medal thrice, in 1952, 1955 and 1979. For the uninitiated, in team sports among badminton-playing countries, a Thomas Cup victory is like a nation winning the Davis Cup in lawn tennis. The Thomas Cup is sometimes referred to as the World Men's Team Championships.

It's time to celebrate the historic victory and savour the moment, of course! However, what mustn't be lost to the nation's eye in the gloss of the golden confetti is how to keep this momentum going. Our Sports Minister has already envisioned a historic medal haul in the next Olympics. But only wishing for great results will not get us anywhere. What needs to be done on the ground is that, apart from cricket, the Government needs to earmark funds to give a genuine thrust to players and athletes from different disciplines. The accomplishment on the badminton court in Bangkok also underlines the need for top-notch training and provision for infrastructural facilities. We must go out hunting for outstanding district-level players and athletes, and build them quality infrastructure there, apart from making sure that they receive nutritious diet and training. In fact, all these things considered and delivered together would go a long way, in fact to the top of the podium frequently, in making India a sporting nation that can hold its own in the galaxy of sports superpowers!





FIRST COLUMN INDIA SLIPS ON FREEDOM OF PRESS INDEX

India owes it to its free press
for its positive world image



BRIJENDER SINGH PANWAR

The ranking of India in the 2022 World Press Freedom Index has fallen to 150 out of 180 countries. The countries lower than India include Sudan (151), Russia (155), Pakistan (157), Bangladesh (162) and China (175). The top three positions went to Norway, Denmark and Sweden. Last year, India was ranked eight points higher at 142. The ranking is based on the performance of the respective country in five broad categories - political context, legal framework, economic context, socio-cultural context and safety of journalists. India's ranking was lowest in the safety of journalists' category (163) and the best in legal framework category (120). Reporters Without Borders, an International NGO having a consultative status with the United Nations, flags a "two-fold increase in polarisation amplified by information chaos-that is media polarisation fuelling divisions within countries, as well as polarisation between countries at the international level". It further notes that "within democratic societies, divisions are growing" due to spread of "opinion media", modelled on Fox News, and the rise of "disinformation circuits" amplified by how social media functions. Commenting on the press of India, the report says "the violence against journalists, the politically partisan media and the concentration of media ownership all demonstrate that press freedom is in crisis". The report described India, as "one of the world's most dangerous



countries for the media". The report further says "journalists are exposed to all kinds of physical violence including police violence, ambushes by political activists and deadly reprisals by criminal groups or corrupt local officials". In the context of "socio-economic" aspect of press freedom, the report states "the enormous diversity of Indian society is barely reflected in the mainstream media, for the most part, only Hindu men from upper castes hold senior positions in journalism or are media executives - a bias that is reflected in media content". Under the category of "political context", the report states that though originally, a product of anti-colonial movement, the Indian Press used to be seen as fairly progressive, but, things changed radically in the 2010s when lot of political interference by ruling central and state governments and the dominance of big families, corporate families in media has been noticed. Under the "economic context", the report, described Indian media as a "colossus with a feet of clay", points out that "media outlets largely depend on advertising contracts with local and regional Governments" and at the national level, the central government has seen that it can exploit this to impose its own narrative, and is now spending more than Rs 130 billion a year on advertisements in the print and online media alone. Revisiting the recent incidents of attacks on journalists while they were reporting from the field, we find that the situation is indeed dangerous.

The incidents which come to mind are putting a journalist in jail for highlighting the grave irregularities in distribution of mid-day meal in Uttar Pradesh, imprisoning a journalist from Kerala who went to cover the incident of burning of a rape victim in Uttar Pradesh, booking a journalist on flimsy grounds for reporting the farmer's movement in Delhi, detaining by the police of two women reporters in Tripura for tweeting and reporting from the scene of violence in the state. In most of the cases, the judiciary came to the rescue of the victimised journalists and that explains the better performance of the "legal framework" in the Reporters Without Borders estimation index. The Governments should realize that India is noticed at international forums because of its image as a vibrant democracy and we owe this status to our free press.

(The writer is a senior journalist and Chairman, Panwar Group of Institutions, Solan, Himachal Pradesh. The views expressed are personal.)

Food politics hits subsidy reforms

The Government should look at ways for pruning subsidy. Indeed, there is an unprecedented scope for it



UTTAM GUPTA

The Union Government has extended the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) for a further period of six months till September 30, 2022. Having already spent over ₹260,000 crore during the first five phases (the scheme has been in operation since April 2020, the fifth phase ended on March 31, 2022), it will need another ₹80,000 crore during April - September, 2022.

Is the extension justified?

In March 2020, the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced the Scheme to mitigate the hardship suffered by people due to a major disruption in economic activity and resultant loss of jobs and income in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic. Under it, the Government would give five kg of rice or wheat per person per month for "free" to around 800 million people through the Public Distribution System (PDS) initially for a period of three months till June 30, 2020. It would also give "free" one kg of pulses per household.

This was in addition to five kg of cereals per person per month that 800 million beneficiaries are already getting at a heavily-subsidised price of ₹3 per kg rice, Rs 2 per kg wheat and ₹1 per kg cereals through PDS under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

On June 30, 2020, the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi announced extension of the scheme for five months till November 30, 2020 with a slight change to provide one kg grams (instead of leaving the choice of pulse to the beneficiary) free to each family per month. In a third round, it was extended for four months till March 31, 2021. During 2021-22, the Scheme got two more extensions of six months each ending March 31, 2022.

During 2020-21, economic activity had remained disrupted almost throughout the year (during the first two quarters, even as growth in gross domestic product or GDP was substantially 'negative' at 24.4 percent and 7.4 percent respectively, in the third/fourth quarters, the revival was marginal at 0.5 percent/1.6 percent) with GDP registering a 'negative' growth of 6.6 percent. As a result, with large-scale drying up of income sources, there was a valid justification for mitigation help that PMGKAY provided as basic food (albeit free).

During the first two quarters of 2021-22, even as the country was afflicted by a second devastating Covid wave leading to hospitalization and deaths on a much larger scale (especially during the April - June 2021), this didn't come in the way of economic revival. In fact, GDP growth rates for the first and second quarters of 2021-22 were 20.3 percent and 8.5 percent respectively. The pace of recovery continued during the third and fourth quarters also despite the third wave. The year ended up with GDP growth of 8.9 percent. Unambiguously, 2021-22 was an year



THERE IS SCOPE FOR SUBSTANTIAL SAVINGS BY CURBING PILFERAGE. BUT THAT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE UNDER THE EXISTING DISPENSATION OF GIVING FOOD AT SUBSIDISED PRICE. PILFERAGE CAN BE ELIMINATED IF ONLY SUBSIDY IS CREDITED TO THE BENEFICIARY THROUGH THE DBT MODE

(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)



of economic resurrection and opening up of work and income earning opportunities. Therefore, a case for continuing the mitigation assistance during the year was much weaker more so, during the second half.

During 2022-23, the economy has entered a phase of consolidation. Though, there are headwinds from a turbulent geo-political situation especially Ukraine crisis which may lead to some moderation in growth from the high of 8.9 percent in the previous year, it is unlikely that this would trigger any significant job/income loss. Hence, extension of the Scheme during the current year is untenable.

Supply of free food comes at a heavy cost to the exchequer. The expenses under the Scheme arrived at by multiplying the per unit cost of purchase from the farmers namely minimum support price (MSP) plus handling and distribution cost (HDC) by the quantity of food given to the beneficiaries - is estimated at ₹340,000 crore for all the six phases put together.

By dispensing with the fifth and sixth phase, the Government could have saved ₹150,000 crore.

While, subsidy given under PMGKAY is one time (triggered by extraordinary event such as Covid), a bigger worry is mammoth subsidy incurred by the Centre under NFSA on giving 5 kg of cereals per month to 800 million persons @ ₹2/3/1 per kg for wheat/rice/coarse cereals which is more or less close to free. And, this subsidy [(MSP + HDC - 2/3/1) x quantity] is recurring.

The expenditure on food subsidy (including due to PMGKAY) was ₹219,000 crore during 2019-20, ₹525,000 crore during 2020-21 and ₹286,000 crore during 2021-22 - a cumulative spend of ₹10,30,000 crore in these three years. Excluding the expenses related to PMGKAY of ₹260,000 crore during this period, the spend on subsidy under NFSA was still huge at ₹770,000 crore.

Meanwhile, the budget allocation for 2022-23 is ₹207,000 crore.

This takes the aggregate for four years (2019-20 to 2022-23) close to ₹10,00,000 crore or around ₹250,000 crore annually. Merely relaxing fiscal deficit (FD) target year-after-year to support the ballooning expenses on food subsidy besides escalating fertilizer subsidy (this is what the FM has done all these years) is not the way to go as this pushes the debt to unsustainable level.

The Government should look at ways for pruning subsidy. Indeed, there is unprecedented scope for it.

The present coverage is 820 million or nearly 2/3rds of the population: Fundamentally, subsidized food is meant for the poor and their number is much less. Even as per the Shanta Kumar committee (2015) recommendation, the number of people eligible for subsidized food should be cut from 67 percent to 40 percent. Denying subsidy to 27 percent or around 380 million will result in saving of about ₹64,000 crore annually (28x5x380x12). This is based on a beneficiary taking all of his/her 5

kg monthly quota as wheat and subsidy @ ₹28 per kg [(MSP: 20 + HDC: 10) - issue price: 2].

The committee also recommended that, sans poorest of the poor under 'Antyodaya Anna Yojana' (AAY), others should pay 50 percent of the MSP. Their number works out to 320 million (820 million - 380 million - 120 million being the number under AAY). They will be charged ₹10 per kg of wheat (50 percent of its MSP), implying saving of ₹8 per kg. Acting on this recommendation would yield annual saving of about ₹15,000 crore (8x5x320x12).

The current issue price of Rs 2/3/1 per kg wheat/rice/coarse cereals was specified in the NFSA legislation. The law enacted in 2013 had frozen these rates for three years. Since, 2016 thus, there is no legal bar on increasing the price. An increase in price by ₹1 per kg can yield savings of ₹5000 crore per annum.

There is also scope for substantial savings by curbing pilferage. But that won't be possible under the existing dispensation of giving food at subsidized price. Pilferage can be eliminated if only subsidy is credited to the account of the beneficiary through direct benefit transfer or DBT mode.

But our political brass doesn't have the gumption to make even a small move on reforming the extant regime. This is because in every election, victory prospects have got intertwined with making 'basic needs' available at subsidized price or even free to a predominant share of the population.

POINT COUNTER POINT

BECAUSE OF THE BJP'S SUPPORT, INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY CONTINUED AT THE (MUNDKA BLAZE) SITE.
— AAP MGD INCHARGE DURGESH PATHAK



IT'S A BASELESS AND BLATANT LIE. THE AAP IS DOING POLITICS OVER A HUMAN TRAGEDY.
— DELHI BJP SPOKESPERSON PRAVEEN SHANKAR KAPOOR

India's top cricket body, the BCCI, is not yet taxed

The issue of taxing the income of BCCI needs to be re-examined even though it is registered as a charitable body

Cricket fever has gripped the nation and BCCI has decided to renew the media rights of Indian Premier League (IPL) in June 2022. Floor price for the auction has been kept at ₹32,890 crore for a five-year period of 2023 to 2027 and the auction is expected to fetch more than ₹35,000 crore. In the previous year, BCCI added two new franchises in IPL for a whopping sum of ₹12,715 crore. Anyway, BCCI is world's richest cricket association and as per media reports, its net worth at March 2021 was more than ₹18,000 crore.

IPL has taken the commercialization of cricket to a new height and revenue authorities also noted this phenomenon. BCCI is registered as a charitable organization and its income is exempt from tax, subject to ful-



SHSHANK SAURAV

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filment of conditions imposed under the Income Tax Act, 1961. Issue of taxing the income of BCCI was taken up by the tax department and it sought to revoke the exemption granted to BCCI. This was challenged before the Mumbai bench of the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT) and the November 2021 order [ITA No. 3301/Mum/2019] came in favour of BCCI. However, even the ITAT carved out in its order that the pertinent issue examined by the tribunal is related only to granting the registration to BCCI and it has not examined the issue of taxability of IPL income.

Various state cricket boards have got tax reliefs on their income but this does not settle the matter for BCCI. In fact, the Gujarat High Court in the matter of Director of Income Tax (E)



Vs Gujarat Cricket Association [Tax Appeal No. 268 of 2012 which was decided on 27 September 2019] had categorically said that "undoubtedly the activities of BCCI are commercial in nature" Para 163 of the said order grants relief to Gujarat Cricket Association on the ground that activities of BCCI (which are of commercial in nature) are different from the

assessee and the assessee has merely received donation from BCCI. In a similar issue related to Chandigarh Lawn Tennis Association Vs ITO (Exemptions), the Chandigarh ITAT bench [ITA No. 1382/CHD/2016] held that income from organizing Davis Cup matches is liable to tax u/s 2(15) of the Income Tax Act, 1961. There are various other

judgements also where it has been affirmed that if any organization which is engaged in advancement of any other object of general public utility, then it must pass the test prescribed u/s 2(15) of the Act otherwise section 13(8) of the Act will become applicable and exemption will be given on a Y-o-Y basis. Such originations can continue to hold their registration but impact of section 2(15) has to be considered while computing their tax-exempt income.

The Football Association of Britain is also registered as a non-profit corporation but in the previous FY it has paid around 20 million GBP as tax and a further provision of 4.8 million GBP is made towards deferred tax (a future tax liability). IPL also runs on similar model of British football clubs and therefore an inference can be drawn.

There was a time when Supreme Court had to intervene into the affairs of the BCCI and former C&AG Vindoo Rai was appointed as interim president on the direction of the court. The apex court approved the memorandum of association and rules & regulations of BCCI in August 2018 and it was expected that the revised framework will provide much needed transparency. Chapter 8 of the Supreme Court approved rules & regulations is dedicated to transparency and it mandates BCCI to upload details of financial outlay etc. on its website. Annual accounts, financial and compliance reports etc. are also to be updated on the official website (www.bcci.tv) but surprisingly, annual reports after FY

2016-17 are not available. Elaborate rules have been made to avoid the conflict of interest in the conduct of BCCI and all such instances are also to be disclosed on the website. Its high time when the apex court asks the cricketing body to submit a compliance status report on all the recommendations. In fact, rules and regulations are by-laws of the entity and they must be complied in letter and spirit. A rich sporting body like BCCI which is managed by politicians, (both from UPA and NDA) and optics are very much important in politics. A lavish manner of conducting the tournaments and resisting the tax payment, conducting the affairs in an opaque manner, etc., are not giving a good perception about the apex cricketing body.

MONEY MATTERS

LIC to list on bourses today

The country's largest insurer LIC will list its shares on the stock exchanges on Tuesday after witnessing a good response from domestic investors in the initial share sale, which fetched Rs 20,557 crore to the government. The government had fixed the issue price of LIC shares at Rs 949 apiece for allotment to investors. LIC policyholders and retail investors have got the shares at a price of Rs 889 and Rs 904 apiece, respectively, after taking into account the discount offered. The Initial Public Offering (IPO) of Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) closed on May 9 and shares were allocated to bidders on May 12. The government sold over 22.13 crore shares or a 3.5 per cent stake in LIC through the IPO. The price band of the issue was Rs 902-949 a share. However, shares were allocated to investors on May 12 at the upper end of the price band. The shares will list on the BSE and NSE on May 17. The LIC IPO - India's largest to date - closed with nearly 3 times subscription, predominately lapped up by retail and institutional buyers, but foreign investor participation remained muted.



McDonald's to sell its Russian business, try to keep workers

McDonald's said Monday that it has started the process of selling its Russian business, which includes 850 restaurants that employ 62,000 people, making it the latest major Western corporation to exit Russia since it invaded Ukraine in February. The fast food giant pointed to the humanitarian crisis caused by the war, saying holding on to its business in Russia is no longer tenable, nor is it consistent with McDonald's values. The Chicago-based company announced in early March that it was temporarily closing its stores in Russia but would continue to pay employees. On Monday, it said it would seek to have a Russian buyer hire those workers and pay them until the sale closes. It did not identify a prospective buyer. CEO Chris Kempczinski said the dedication and loyalty to McDonald's of employees and hundreds of Russian suppliers made it a difficult decision to leave.



BEL to manufacture battery packs for Triton electric trucks

The Pune unit of Navratna Defence PSU Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) will manufacture Li-ion battery packs for the electric trucks of US-based Triton, as part of a MoU signed between the two companies. The agreement was inked to explore manufacturing of battery cells in India for energy storage systems and electric vehicles in the heavy vehicle segment for the requirements of customers in USA, India and other countries, Bengaluru-headquartered BEL said in a statement on Monday. Triton recently signed an MoU with the Gujarat State government for setting up an EV truck manufacturing plant, with a commitment to invest around Rs 10,800 crore over a span of five years. BEL is among the five organisations which will be investing in this Triton EV manufacturing hub at Bhuj, Gujarat. BEL, a leader in Defence electronics, has in recent years been continuously exploring opportunities in allied non-defence areas as part of its diversification initiatives, the statement said.



BGauss unveils third electric scooter D15

BGauss, a brand of RR Global, on Monday unveiled its third electric scooter - D15. D15 follows B8 and A2 electric scooters, which have been well-received by consumers across the country. Locally manufactured, D15 comes with smart features, stylish design, and a strong and sturdy body, the Mumbai-based company said in a statement. The D15 aims to cater to the growing demands of the EV enthusiasts in the country by offering a stylish, smart and reliable product, which blends technology with a superior riding experience. BGauss Auto founder and Managing Director Hemant Kabra said. The electric scooter is powered by a 3.2 kWh Li-ion battery, and it can accelerate from 0 to 60 kmph in just 7 seconds in sports mode.

Spiralling inflation may boost gold demand as a hedge: Report

Despite the World Gold Council's projection of a dip in consumer demand for the precious metal this fiscal on the back of rising prices and record imports last fiscal, a foreign brokerage report has suggested that the demand may rise more than generally projected as households may snap up the metal as a hedge against spiralling inflation. Gold imports rose 33.34 per cent to USD 46.14 billion in FY22 to 837 tonnes or 1.5 times above the pandemic low in FY21 and 12 per cent more than the pre-pandemic average of FY16-20, leading to a higher current account deficit that's seen at 3 per cent of GDP, government data showed last month. Imports were only worth USD 34.62 billion in the pandemic-hit FY21. After a record USD 54 billion worth of imports in FY13, inward gold shipments have been waning and had fallen to USD 28 billion in FY20 but then began to rise again and



Gold imports are projected to marginally decline to USD 43 billion in FY23, according to UBS Securities India report released on Monday. The surge in gold imports in FY22 contributed to the widening of the trade deficit to USD 192.41 billion as against USD 102.62 billion in FY21. India is the world's second-biggest gold consumer after China.

The imports are largely driven by the jewellery industry. The gems & jewellery exports grew about 50 per cent to about USD 39 billion in FY22. Current account deficit widened to USD 23 billion or 2.7 per cent of GDP in the first three quarters, according to the RBI data. Our regression analysis suggests that a 1 per cent point increase in inflation leads to 2.6 per cent rise in gold demand. While the economic ramifications of persistently high inflation, stretched

'RBI's move to raise rates, good monsoon help in containing inflation'

The Reserve Bank's decision to raise benchmark interest rates and the likelihood of a good monsoon will help in containing inflation, Sanjiv Bajaj, the newly-elected president of industry body CII, said on Monday. "I do believe that we are now in an era of higher interest rates. This will help us in bringing down inflation, at least a part of that going forward," Bajaj said, addressing his maiden press conference after taking over as the CII chief. He said various factors combined with the hope of a strong monsoon "should put us in a better place" by the second half of the year for policymakers to decide where inflation and interest rates move. Bajaj observed that the rise of inflation has two aspects -- demand and supply side. "RBI has already started the cycle of taking interest rates up and we should expect interest rates to continue moving up in the coming year. We would expect from RBI a clear direction to how they are going to address interest rates.



Hopefully in the next monetary policy review we should be able to hear from them something to that extent," he said. CII estimates India's GDP growth to be in the band of 7.4 - 8.2 per cent, depending upon the global oil prices. The industry body's theme for 2022-23 is Beyond India@75: Competitiveness, Growth, Sustainability, and Internationalisation. Sharing the likely growth scenarios for the Indian economy for this year, Bajaj, said, "CII expects the GDP growth in a range of 7.4-8.2 per cent in 2022-23, with the outlook critically hinging on the trajectory of global crude oil prices." He was addressing the media for the first time after taking over as president CII. He further explained, "global headwinds and inflation will have to be countered with robust policy reforms, both domestic and external sector reforms, to unlock the growth potential of the economy." Bajaj said tailwinds that are supportive of growth in the short-term include government capex, private sector investment which is showing an uptick aided by strong demand in some sectors and the PLI (Production-Linked Incentive) scheme push in the others, good agriculture season on the back of the expectations of a good monsoon and positive export momentum.

Petrol, diesel sales rebound in May

India's petrol and diesel consumption jumped in May as pick up in the economic activity as well as the start of the harvesting season aided the return of demand, a preliminary industry data showed on Monday. Petrol sales grew 14 per cent during the first half of May when compared with the same period in the preceding month, while diesel demand rose 1.8 per cent. Cooking gas LPG, which last month saw consumption declining because of high prices, posted a 2.8 per cent rise in sales during May 1-15. Petrol sales by state-owned fuel retailers, which control roughly 90 per cent of the market, at 1.28 million tonnes during May 1-15 were 59.7 per cent higher than the same period last year and 16.3 per cent higher than the period in



2019, preliminary industry data showed. The consumption was 13.9 per cent more than the 1.12 million tonnes of sales in the first half of April 2022. Diesel, the most-used fuel in the country, saw sales jumping 37.8 per cent year-on-year to 3.05 million tonnes in the first half of May. This was, however, 1.5 per cent lower than sales in April 2019. It was 1.8 per cent higher than 2.99 million tonnes of consumption during April 1-15 this year. Industry sources said consumption in May is higher because of demand returning after high prices in the previous month cut demand. Also aiding the demand was the start of the harvesting season. Another factor was the low base effect. April saw consumption drop due to a Rs 10 per litre hike in petrol and diesel prices after an over four-month hiatus.

SJVN to develop hydel 490 MW power project in Nepal

State-owned SJVN Ltd will develop another hydro power project Arun-4 worth Rs 4,900 crore in Nepal. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the development of the 490 MW Arun-4 hydro electric project in Nepal has been signed in Lumbini, Nepal in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of Nepal Sher Bahadur Deuba, the company said in a statement on Monday. SJVN Chairman and Managing Director Nand Lal Sharma said it will be the third mega project to be constructed by the company in Nepal. The construction of 900 MW Arun-3 project is in progress and the 669 MW Lower Arun project is at the survey and investigation stage. With the MoU, signed by Sharma and Nepal Electricity



Authority (NEA) Managing Director Kulman Ghising, SJVN has three projects with a total capacity of 2,059 MW in Nepal. According to Sharma, SJVN is targeting to have 5,000 MW projects in Nepal by 2030. The 490 MW, Arun-4 hydro electric project will be developed as a joint venture by SJVN and NEA, wherein the former will have the majority

enables optimum utilisation of manpower, infrastructure and financial resources. This concept -- which will help in allocation of hydro projects in one single river basin to one developer -- has been accepted by the Nepal government as well as by the state governments of Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh. In addition to the three hydro projects in Nepal, SJVN is also constructing 217-km 400 kV associated transmission system for evacuation of power. "With total portfolio of around 31,500 MW, SJVN now has power projects of more than 30 GW capacity under operation and different stages of development. These recent additions of new projects are leading the company towards actualising of its shared vision of 5,000 MW by 2023; 25,000 MW by 2030 and; 50,000 MW installed capacity by 2040," Sharma said.

Lenovo unveils new range of ThinkCentre Neo desktops in India

Lenovo on Monday announced its new 'ThinkCentre neo' portfolio of desktop computers in India, promising performance boost over the previous generation, better power management capabilities, and smarter workplace collaboration features. ThinkCentre is known for its enterprise-oriented desktops, and the latest range of 'neo' machines provide up to 14 per cent performance boost over the previous generation, the Personal Computer (PC) maker said. They aim to enhance everyday productivity with better power management, space-saving design, and smarter workplace collaboration features.

Adani offers to acquire 26% of Ambuja Cements and ACC from open market

A day after announcing USD 10.5 billion deal to acquire Holcim's India business, the Adani family has made an open offer to acquire a 26 per cent stake each in its two listed companies Ambuja Cements and ACC Ltd from public shareholders. The Asia's richest man Gautam Adani's group on Monday through its Mauritius-based subsidiary Endeavour Trade and Investment has made an open offer at Rs 385 per share for Ambuja Cements Ltd and Rs 2,300 per share for ACC Ltd. For Ambuja Cements, Adani group has made an open offer to its public shareholders to acquire up to 51.63 crore equity shares, representing 26 per cent of the expanded share capital, aggregating to a total consideration of Rs 19,879.57 crore. While for ACC Ltd, Adani group has offered to acquire up to 4.89 crore shares held by public shareholders, representing 26 per cent of the expanded share capital, aggregating to a total consideration of Rs 11,259.97 crore. This would be "subject to



the receipt of the Required Statutory Approval," it said. The public announcement was jointly issued by ICICI Securities India, the joint managers to the open offer at bourses. This open offer has been triggered following the execution of the share purchase agreement between the Adani group and Holcim to acquire controlling stake in the latter's businesses in India "for an aggregate consideration of USD equivalent to Rs 50,181.04 crore". Endeavour Trade and Investment is promoted by Acropolis Trade and Investment Ltd.

Sensex, Nifty end six-day fall as banking shares advance

Benchmark BSE Sensex rebounded by 180 points at close after a see-saw trade on Monday, ending its six-day falling streak on the back of gains in banking, financials, power and auto counters. The 30-share BSE benchmark gained 180.22 points or 0.34 per cent to settle at 52,973.84. During the day, it zoomed 634.66 points or 1.20 per cent to 53,428.28. The broader NSE Nifty went up by 60.15 points or 0.38 per cent to finish at 15,842.30, logging its first gain in seven sessions. Sensex and Nifty tanked over 5 per cent in the previous six sessions due to heavy selling by FPIs over inflation concerns. Among the Sensex firms, NTPC, Bajaj Finance, Maruti, State Bank of India, HDFC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, M&M, IndusInd Bank, Larsen & Toubro, Titan and HDFC Bank were the biggest gainers. In contrast, UltraTech Cement, Asian Paints, ITC and TCS were among the laggards.

DGTR for continuation of duty on Chinese solar glass

The commerce ministry's investigation arm DGTR has recommended for continuation of anti-dumping duty on Chinese solar glass for two years with a view to guard domestic players from cheap imports. In a notification, the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) has said that continued imposition of anti-dumping duty is required on 'textured tempered coated and un-coated glass' from China. The product in the market parlance is also known by various names such as solar glass, solar glass low iron and solar photovoltaic glass. It is used as a component in solar photovoltaic panels and solar thermal applications. The designated authority considers it appropriate to recommend continuation of anti-dumping duty on the imports of subject goods from the subject country for further period of 2 years...." the DGTR has said.

Disclosure lapses: Sebi bars Urja Global, 4 individuals from securities mkt

Sebi has barred Urja Global and four individuals from the securities market for various disclosure lapses and also directed the firm to obtain a practising company secretary's certificate of authenticity for corporate announcements to be made in the next three years. The directions are part of a 56-page order passed by the watchdog on Friday about the matter back in March 2021. Sebi, which carried out an examination for the period from April 2018 to August 2019, found alleged lapses, including making an artificial scheme for a corporate announcement in connection with Nippon Shinyaku, which was false and misleading.

NTPC mulls girl empowerment mission in 35 project locations

State-run power giant NTPC is planning to conduct its flagship corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative -- girl empowerment mission (GEM) -- in about 35 project locations this year. The GEM is for empowering young girls to realise their dreams, as per a company statement. According to the statement, NTPC is supporting the upliftment of girls, with focus on the girl child from the villages around NTPC projects. Further, it stated that it is planning to conduct its GEM initiative in about 35 project locations during this year.



The GEM programme has empowered girls from across the country and made them aware of basic education, health and self-defence. With this initiative, NTPC

aims to help these girls break the glass ceiling and dispel the misconception about female foeticide in rural areas. The initiative has created a space for the children to

showcase their talents and capabilities. NTPC started GEM in 2018, and contributed to the empowerment of unfortunate girls in the vicinity of its project loca-

tions. By 2019, GEM has benefited 2,300 girls across 20 project locations. NTPC over-saw the enrolment of girl students between the age of 10-12 years from different locations such as Dadri, Korba, Farakka, Sipat, Singrauli, Kawas, Ramagundam, Simhadri and other project areas. The GEM ensures that the girl child grows into a well-rounded adult; with ample curiosity and quality communication and social skills. Additionally, it motivates the girl child to nurture their creativity, sharpen psychological, social and emotional growth, and makes learning a lively, engaging, and impactful experience.

Akshay Kumar-starrer Prithviraj had 5,000 costumes, 500 turbans used during shoot

The makers of Akshay Kumar's upcoming historical *Prithviraj*, which is based on the life and valour of Prithviraj Chauhan, had to create over 50,000 costumes and also used 500 different types of turbans during the shoot.

Akshay Kumar says, "Rarely do films take this much effort and embark upon such monumental tasks. Every element of our film which is based on the life of Samrat Prithviraj Chauhan has been dealt with utmost sincerity, authenticity and reverence.

We have paid attention to the minutest details while making the film because we wanted this

to be the most glorious retelling of Samrat Prithviraj's life on the big screen," he said.

The film's director Chandraprakash Dwivedi says, "Detailing was key to making a film like *Prithviraj*. Like for example, 500 different turbans were created for the film. All these were authentic replication of the kinds of turbans worn by kings, masses, people of various professions at that time.

We had an expert on turban styling on the set who would oversee the process of these turbans being worn by our actors," he said.

He further adds, "Over



50,000 cos-

tumes were handmade for the film by a costume designer who, along with his team, was specially flown in from Rajasthan to stay in Mumbai and make these costumes from scratch."

He feels glad that he had a producer like Aditya Chopra who believed in his vision for the film and backed him completely to tell a story like this in the grandest way possible.

Camila Cabello joins *The Voice* season 22 as coach, Kelly Clarkson exits

Pop star Camila Cabello is joining the 22nd season of *The Voice* as a coach following the departure of Kelly Clarkson.

According to Deadline, Cabello will serve on the panel of the NBC reality competition series alongside Blake Shelton, John Legend and Gwen Stefani.

Clarkson has served as a

coach for the last eight seasons of the show. She joined in 2014 and won it a total of four times, alongside contestants Brynn Cartelli, Chevel Shepherd, Jake Hoot and Girl Named Tom.

It marks the reality TV judging debut of Cabello, who broke through on another reality music competition series

The X Factor as part of her former group Fifth Harmony.

The 25-year-old singer, known for hit songs such as 'Havana' and 'Don't Go Yet', announced the news on TikTok.

Cabello previously worked with Legend helping his team on the last season of *The Voice*.

The show will air later this year.



Kourtney Kardashian, Travis Barker reportedly married

Reality television personality Kourtney Kardashian and musician Travis Barker got legally married over the weekend.

According to a report in *People* magazine, the couple exchanged vows in Santa Barbara, California in an intimate ceremony in the presence of a few close friends and family members.

Kardashian's younger sister Kylie Jenner, however, didn't make it to the wedding as she

was attending the 2022 Billboard Music Awards with partner-rapper Travis Scott and daughter Stormi Webster.

People reported that Kardashian, 43, and Barker, 46, are planning to have a larger wedding ceremony in Italy.

Their legal marriage follows a practice marriage the couple undertook in a Las Vegas chapel wedding ceremony in early April.

The pair announced their engagement last October after eight months of dating.

Kardashian has three

children Mason, 12, Penelope, nine, and Reign, seven, who she co-parents with former husband and *Talented* founder Scott Disick.

Barker shares two children Landon (18) and Alabama (16) with former wife and actor Shanna Moakler.

The marriage is Kardashian's first and Barker's third.

The couple sparked romance rumours back in December 2020 and made their relationship Instagram official in February 2021.

Nicola Coughlan reveals *Bridgerton 3* will follow Colin and Penelope's love story

Irish actress and *Bridgerton* star Nicola Coughlan recently made a huge revelation about the American period drama show, which is based on Julia Quinn's collection of novels.

Nicola, who plays Penelope Featherington and her alter ego Lady Whistledown, whose identity was revealed at the end of season 1, said that the upcoming season will follow her character Penelope Featherington and Colin Bridgerton (played by Luke Newton) as their friendship potentially blooms into something more all while balancing her double life as Lady Whistledown, reports 'Deadline'. The actress was speaking as a panellist at Netflix's FYSEE Space's opening night ATAS.

'Deadline' quoted Nicola as she said, "Like Lady Whistledown, I have been keeping a secret for



Bridgerton, respectively, and their quests for love.

Shondaland and Netflix already had taken liberty by revealing Lady Whistledown's identity at the end of Season 1; in the books that does not happen until the fourth book which centers on Penelope.

'Deadline' had earlier revealed that Season 3 also will feature Hannah Dodd as Francesca Bridgerton, taking over the role from Ruby Stokes who left and is the lead of another Netflix series, *Lockwood & Co.* Casting of the new season is already underway.

The panel also included *Bridgerton* cast members Simone Ashley, Charithra Chandran, series creator executive producer and Season 1&2 show runner Chris Van Dusen, costume designer Sophie Canale and composer Kris Bowers. It was moderated by actress and host Yvette Nicole Brown.

FUN

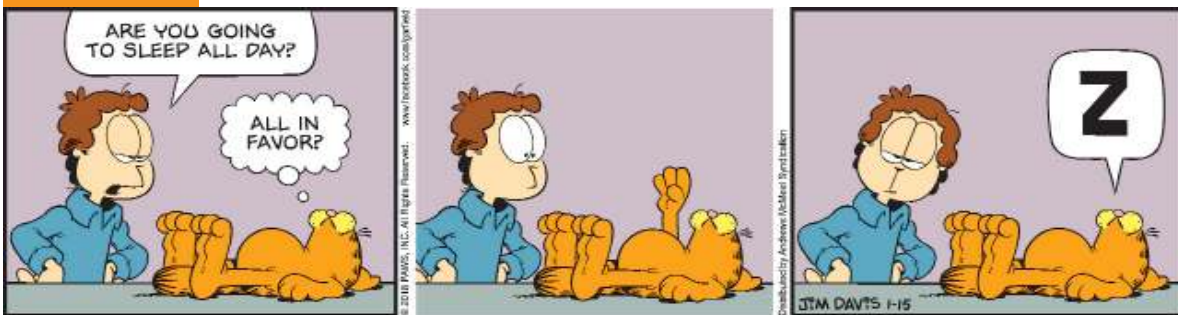
ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



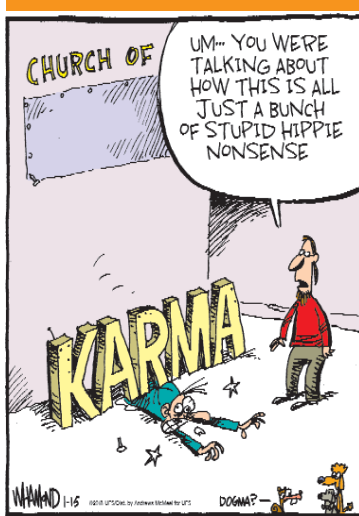
NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



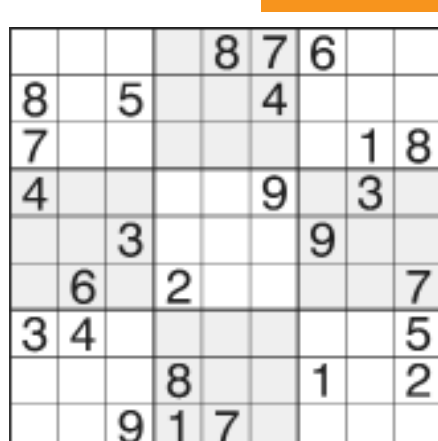
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

6	7	2	8	3	1	5	4	9
3	1	9	6	4	5	2	7	8
5	4	8	7	9	2	1	3	6
8	6	4	1	5	7	9	2	3
1	5	7	9	2	3	6	8	4
2	9	3	4	6	8	7	5	1
4	3	5	2	1	6	8	9	7
9	8	1	5	7	4	3	6	2
7	2	6	3	8	9	4	1	5

Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

ACROSS

- A happy sound
- This supports your head
- Goes rotten
- Tiny mark
- A liquid measure
- A house made of hard snow
- This makes dough rise
- Follows seventh
- Final
- A long strip of paper used as a decoration

DOWN

- Purchase
- Someone watching a game or show
- You wear these
- A type of clock that makes a noise to wake you up
- Blacken with heat
- Frozen water



I created an inner world to play this character, says Pranay Pachauri

Pranay Pachauri, who was recently seen in the Bollywood digital superhit film *Shershaah*, talks about his role, his experience working in *Guilty Minds* and some flashbacks

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Courts often show us much of the melodrama in Hindi cinematic space, unlike many other genres. This time, the creator and director of *Guilty Minds* raises the bar. *Guilty Minds* is not limited to the courtroom but is about where the society stands.

The story revolves around three law school friends who are often put opposite each other in the court of law.

If you think of when you will have your own version of such an iconic legal drama show, here comes the hugely entertaining and thought-provoking *Guilty Minds*, where actor Pranay Pachauri 'ne toh dhoom machadi'.

He just didn't give a banging performance for the sake of it, he really immersed himself in the role to an extent where he put on a few kilos to look the part.

In an exclusive conversation with him, he says, "As an actor, you work so hard to pull off performances by building an inner and outer world for your character with the hope that you wow the audiences. On top of that, being a part of such a well-made show was like icing on the cake. To be honest, the team on and off camera have been so sincere from day one that the atmosphere and energy on set were always charged and the directors were a delight to work with. I was so impressed with the level of research they had done and they were so clear about what they wanted!"

Pranay essays the role of this young lawyer, Shubhrat Khanna, who is highly

ambitious, driven, and protective of his family's legacy. "I was excited to play someone like Shubhrat because in real life I am the complete opposite of him. I had to create an inner world first of this character in order to understand his mind, empathise with him, and understand why he is the way he is, and then work on the outer world to get his mannerisms and body language right, whether it was learning to play squash or putting on weight for the character. I went all in and gave my best."

Since the web series was shot during the pandemic, there were a lot of changes that the actors had to deal with. As an actor, it changed the way Pranay saw things.

He mentioned,

"I had an amazing relationship with almost everyone on set. The crew was wonderful and so was the cast, but I have such sweet memories of sharing experiences with Kulbhushan ji and it was a dream come true to even share screen space with him, and that too, as my grandfather. I also had a lovely bond with

my sister, played by Namrata Sheth. We behaved like siblings onset and offset. My partner in crime, Diksha Juneja, and I go back to a point where she used to take my auditions as a casting director, and working on set together was just life coming full circle."

Pranay always wanted to be a storyteller as a child and was in the habit of writing and narrating stories either to save himself from why didn't he do his homework to enchant or to enchant his friends with stories of legends and ghosts. He continued, "I always knew this was my forte, but as I come from a corporate background, the emphasis was on completing education first and so I was pursuing CA, but as destiny would have it, I got a chance to audition for this film called *Time Out*, which turned out to be my debut film produced by Viacom18 and was my ticket to Bollywood. I moved to Mumbai to realise my childhood dream, from hosting a YouTube show to doing a lot of web series with Disney like *Trip 2* and *Tere Liye*. From doing a major feature film, *Shershaah*, with

Dharma, life kept teaching and pushing me a lot. Even

though it took me a lot of years to settle down and find my footing here, hustling and living in Mumbai made me street-smart and confident in my own skin. I was the last person to get cast in the show and this was happening at a time when I was trying hard to crack a good role. I got a call to audition for this character and only had a few hours to prepare for an intense scene. I liked the graph and depth of the character, so I went ahead and gave it my all and the rest, as they say, is history."

He has been so sweet about senior actor Kulbhushan Kharbhandha that he couldn't stop gushing about him.

He said, "He has been an adventurous man, lived a complete life and translated all of his experiences into his characters, which was amazing advice because till you don't live your life to the fullest, you won't enrich yourself with experiences, which for an actor is the best emotional bank to tap into. I am lucky to be working with him as I have been enamoured by his performances, and to work with such a legend is nothing short of a dream come true."

From *Shershaah* to *Guilty Minds*, a leap in its own right, to which he replies, "I think OTT as a platform has been a boon for the Indian audiences and creators, as now, more and more people are getting a chance to showcase their talent. At the core of it, the idea is to create a world-class cinema, to create stories that touch you, inspire you, and give you hope, so it's not that different! Today, any successful OTT hit show or an actor is at par in terms of popularity with the Indian Bollywood actors for the Indian audience. While Bollywood does it through films, OTT, on the other hand, is an in-depth immersive experience as it produces more series, which gives the story more layers and the audience time to relate to these characters."

In the near future, he would like to work on projects that bridge the gap between the country's urban and rural areas. "I want to be a part of a story that inspires the common man of this country. I want to explore and create projects that deal with the history, science, and culture of our country because we are so rich in culture and we have so many stories that we need to embrace and explore ourselves at a micro and a macro level. Films like *Swades*, *Jodha Akbar*, are timeless. In addition, my dream is to do a space film. And why not, do a film with the Baadshah of this industry, the only actor I will always be in awe of purely for his personality, wit, demeanour, and charm."



Hypertension, the silent killer

This speedy pace of competition is bringing hypertension rocketing towards us.

However, many around us have set really low bars for stress levels.

Hearing one say it's all in your mind is humiliating, no it's in our minds because it's a thing that the world is truly grappling with. Everywhere you go, there is pressure. Why?

When asked, Dr. Mohammed Sadiq Azam, Consultant Cardiologist at KIMS Hospitals said, "Unfortunately, many with hypertension are unaware of its presence because it may have no warning signs or symptoms until it's too late. Hence, it is essential to have regular monitoring of blood pressure. The causes of hypertension are in two folds; modifiable and unmodifiable. Non-modifiable risk factors include and family history of hypertension, age > 65 years and co-existing diseases like diabetes or kidney disease. Modifiable risk factors are unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, tobacco/alcohol consumption and being overweight or obese. Due to the fast paced lifestyle with little to no regard to personal health as well as effects of the pandemic, we have seen a dramatic rise in these modifiable risk factors. This is still preventable hypertension. Today, we are seeing young adults in their early 30s coming down with hypertension. This is preventable just by paying attention to our health and bringing about lifestyle changes like regular exercise."

Make use of such services where you will get genuine guidance rather than believing random forwards. People need to understand that everything we eat and everything we do has a direct influence on our blood pressure. Sitting is the new smoking. Make walking a part of your life. Take the stairs, eat clean, eat greens, watch your weight. And most important, do not neglect your mental health. Stress is an often present and often neglected risk factor."

With this year, the finance budget focusing more on mental health, the doctor feels, "It is a welcome move by the government to allocate a part of the budget to focus on mental health. We are seeing young adults with no risk factors coming with newly diagnosed high blood pressure and massive heart attacks. On questioning, they reveal that they have been under tremendous mental stress. So it's a real problem, and it's getting worse. The first step will be to accept it and identify it. Don't stigmatise and treat someone's mental health issues as a joke. Stop telling people to be strong and there is nothing called stress. When we stop stigmatising mental health, people will come forward with their issues and will get treated for it."

Take a step back. Why are you trying to be everything to everyone? Don't let perfectionism scuffle you.

While in rural areas there is

no one can truly escape this phenomenon. A landmark study from India showed that about 33% of urban and 25% of rural Indians were hypertensive in 2014. The numbers have only risen since then. A data by World Health Organisation estimated roughly 1.28 billion people are hypertensive worldwide. The worst is that 46% of adults are unaware that they have hypertension. The prevalence of awareness and treatment is 25% in rural India and 38% in urban areas of the country. "This shows that the need of the hour is to spread awareness about hypertension especially in rural areas but also in urban areas. While in rural areas there is

An Eccentric Design Attic

K. RAMYA SREE

With increasing literacy and expenditure on quality life and exposure to the modern world, many of us are opting for soothing interiors regardless of the little-space that we have. This, in turn, is leading to a rise in the number of interior designers in the country.

Students are currently enrolling in interior design courses in greater numbers. Today, we have with us the founders of DesignAttic, a versatile interior design studio, helmed by young entrepreneurs, Dhvani Bhatiya and Rhea Jacob Eapen, to talk about their journey, interior design trends, among others. Firstly, Design Attic offers a fresh take on innovative interior designs, which in turn falls in step with the evolving tastes of Indian cou-

ples and their families.

In Conversation with *The Pioneer*, Dhvani Bhatiya and Rhea Jacob Eapen informed us about their journey. "With a strong family background in construction and interiors, it was natural for Rhea to develop a creative inclination toward interior design. After graduating with a remarkable portfolio in the same from Raffles in 2013, she went on to collaborate and found her own interior firm with college comrade Dhvani Bhatiya. For Dhvani, amusingly, interior designing was formerly never on the cards. She was all set to enter the corporate world of accounting until she worked on refurbishing her own home.

Her newfound interest and acumen in interiors led her to pursue a degree in interior design from Raffles, after which she ventured into

the world of designing with Rhea Jacob Eapen and Design Attic."

As the duo was young, independent women from business backgrounds, they always envisioned running their own firm someday. Dhvani began her career working for a design firm and enjoyed every day that she worked there. Rhea was unsure about working for a firm and so, together, they joined forces and formed Design Attic. With an infallible eye for detail and a classic yet contemporary touch to every project that they lay their hands on, their work goes to testify that simplicity indeed is the

ultimate form of sophistication.

Being women and young, they had to face their share of hardships in the process, and they overcame all of them with grace. They say, "It took a while for our contractors to get accustomed to the fact that they had to take instructions from women. Being young designers, clients too were skeptical of our ability to execute the project, despite the fact that they trusted us with designing their spaces."

Lastly, they shared a few tips and tricks to make your home summer-ready:

- Change your soft furnishings to light and fresh shades of color.
- Use sheer curtains to attain a bright and airy feel.
- Opt for dark curtains to keep out harsh sunlight.
- Add Colorful plants and lots of greenery to your spaces which will also help in purifying the air you breathe.
- Declutter Your space, especially with heavy pieces of furniture since this will make the place look and feel more open.
- Use LED lights that emit less heat.





Satwik-Chirag pull out of Thailand Open

PTI ■ BANGKOK

Star doubles pairing of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, who played a pivotal role in India's historic Thomas Cup triumph, pulled out of the Thailand Open Super 500 tournament beginning here on Tuesday.

It is learnt that Chirag suffered some niggles during the tournament and the pair has informed the Badminton Association of India on Monday about their decision to skip the event this week.

The World No 8 pair had lost just one match in the Thomas Cup — against Chinese Taipei and brought India back into the contest after initial reversals against Malaysia and Denmark in the quarterfinals and semifinals here.

Among Indian others in fray, World Championships

Silver medallist Kidambi Srikanth, seeded eighth, who had stayed unbeaten with six wins at Thomas Cup, will face Brice Leverdez, while HS Prannoy, who had pulled off wins in the deciding third singles in the knockout stages, meets Malaysia's Daren Liew.

Tokyo Olympian B Sai Praneeth will lock horns with Japan's Koki Watanabe, while Sourabh Verma faces France's Toma Junior Popov.

In women's singles, double Olympic medallist P V Sindhu will be playing a qualifier, while Saina Nehwal will be pitted against Korea's Kim Ga Eun.

In men's doubles, MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila, and Krishna Prasad Garaga and Vishnuvardhan Goud Panjala, and Shyam Prasad and S Sunijith, Manu Attri and B Sumeeth Attri, Ishaan Bhatnagar and Sai Pratheek K, are in the fray.

Milan clubs take title race to final day

AP ■ MILAN

Lautaro Martinez ensured the Serie A title race will head into the final week of the season on Sunday with a brace in Inter Milan's 3-1 win at Cagliari to stay two points behind leaders AC Milan.

Reigning champions Inter had to win to have any hope of retaining their league crown after Milan beat Atalanta 2-0 earlier in the day.

And goals in each half from Mattia Darmian's and Martinez ensured that Simone Inzaghi's side would push their local rivals down to the wire with a hard-fought victory in Sardinia.

Cagliari meanwhile stay two points behind Salernitana, who sit just outside the relegation zone.

Simone Inzaghi's Inter could have been tired after a thrilling, extra-time Italian Cup triumph over old foes Juventus on Wednesday but came through a tricky test against a side scrapping for their top flight lives.

They had already had a Milan Skriniar goal ruled out for handball when Darmian did put the away side ahead, and once Martinez lashed home his first six minutes after the break he thought that was that.

Charalampos Lykogiannis thumped home from distance almost straight afterwards to give Cagliari hope of getting an unlikely result, but with six minutes remaining Martinez dinked home his second to calm Inter nerves.

On the final day Inter host Sampdoria, who are now safe thanks to defeat for 18th-placed Cagliari, while Milan travel to Sassuolo needing



Liverpool assess Salah, Van Dijk ahead of Southampton clash

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Jürgen Klopp said Liverpool were assessing the fitness of Mohamed Salah and Virgil van Dijk as they prepare for their must-win Premier League match against Southampton on Tuesday.

The quadruple-chasing Reds were given fresh hope they could pip Manchester City to the title when Pep Guardiola's team dropped two points in a 2-2 draw at West Ham on Sunday.

Defending champions City, with one

game remaining, are four points clear at the top of the table with a significantly better goal difference than their rivals, who have two games left.

Liverpool beat Chelsea on penalties in the FA Cup final at the weekend to complete the second leg of a potential quadruple.

But Klopp is waiting to find out the extent of injuries to top-scorer Salah and defensive talisman Van Dijk, who were both forced off at Wembley on Saturday.

Defender Andy Robertson was also

taken off in the latter stages due to cramp, while Klopp confirmed that Fabinho would not be involved at Southampton after suffering a muscle injury at Aston Villa last week.

"This process has not finished yet because we only played the 120 minutes two days ago," Klopp told reporters on Monday.

"So when the boys arrive today I have to make a lot of decisions. Then we will line up a team.

"What I can promise and definite-

ly say is we will line up a team only for one reason — to try to win the game at Southampton, as difficult as it is, because that obviously is the job to do.

"We have to see who is able to help. The 30 extra minutes (at Wembley) made a big difference, but we have to see." Liverpool, who face Real Madrid in the Champions League final later this month, can cut City's lead to a single point with victory at St Mary's, but Klopp does not expect Guardiola's side to slip up again.

Luis Suarez emotional after final home game: Atletico will remain 'in my heart'



AP ■ MADRID

Luis Suarez said he will always have Atletico Madrid in his heart after the striker waved goodbye to the club's home fans following a 1-1 draw against Sevilla on Sunday.

The result meant Sevilla finally confirmed their place in La Liga's top four as a late equaliser by Youssef En-Nesyri at the Wanda Metropolitano

secured qualification for the Champions League.

"Thank you Lucho for making us champions", read a giant banner unfurled in the crowd before kick-off while Suarez was visibly tearful as he paraded the pitch with his family after full-time.

The 35-year-old is set to leave Atletico when his two-year contract expires this summer. After being forced out by cash-

strapped Barcelona in 2020, Suarez exacted revenge by proving instrumental in Atletico's monumental La Liga title triumph last season, when he scored 21 goals in 32 league appearances and finished as the team's top scorer.

He has been useful but less emphatic this term, scoring 14 goals in 48 appearances and his own dip from last year's high standards has been symptomatic of Atletico's malaise more generally.

Suarez has often started on the bench since the turn of the year, with Joao Felix increasingly preferred by Atletico coach Diego Simeone.

"I thank all the Atletico fans, every one of them," said Suarez afterwards.

"The love they gave me since I arrived has been amazing and I will not forget it. I tried to return it on the pitch, I gave myself 200 per cent to a club that opened its doors to me. I will always carry the affection of this club with me after not being able to enjoy myself the previous season. I will take Atletico with me in my heart."

Jose Gimenez's first-half header looked set to give Atletico victory and with Real Betis beating Granada, Sevilla's fight for fourth would have gone down to a nail-biting final day. Instead, En-Nesyri nodded in

Barca seal 2nd place



AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona sealed second place although a drab, goalless draw away at Getafe extends an underwhelming end to the campaign for the Catalans. The result, though, suited both teams as a point guaranteed Getafe's survival.

Cadiz are right in the middle of the relegation fight and left the Nuevo Mirandilla disappointed, despite a 1-1 draw at home to already-crowned champions Real Madrid. Carlo

Oliver Torres' cross with five minutes remaining to earn Sevilla the point they needed to guarantee their top-four spot,

Anelotti continues to rotate his team ahead of the Champions League final against Liverpool on May 28 and Cadiz were the latest team to profit, with Karim Benzema, Thibaut Courtois and Luka Modric all left at home.

Madrid took the lead when Mariano Diaz steered in and while Cadiz equalised through Ruben Sobrino, they could have won it when Andrey Lunin brought down Alvaro Negredo and the referee pointed to the spot.

after a hugely disappointing few weeks that has seen their coach Julen Lopetegui come under pressure.

Mbappe wins French league's best player award for 3rd time

AP ■ PARIS

Paris Saint-Germain striker Kylian Mbappe won the French league's best player award for the third time in his career on Sunday, then diplomatically swerved a question about his future.

Mbappe is out of contract at PSG next month and touted to join Karim Benzema at Real Madrid in what would be a formidable attack force.

Mbappe said he didn't want to announce his decision during the ceremony but added "Yes, pretty much" when asked if he's made his mind up over whether to stay or go.

Mbappe is the league's top scorer with 25 goals for the French champion and has netted 36 in all competitions.

The awards are given annually by the National Union of Professional Football Players (UNFP) to players in France's top two divisions.

The 23-year-old France star won the award last year — when Mbappe netted a career-high 42 goals overall — and in 2019.

"It's always an honor to be here. Winning for a third time in a row is incredible," Mbappe said. "I've felt the recognition this season more than ever." Although PSG comfortably won the league title — which it surprisingly lost to Lille last season — Mbappe's goals and assists masked glaring shortcomings which were ruthlessly exposed by Madrid in the round of 16 in the Champions League.

Mbappe has scored 168 goals for PSG since joining from Monaco in a deal worth 180 million euros five years ago, the second highest tally in the club's history behind former teammate Edinson Cavani with 200 goals.

"I want to keep improving," Mbappe said, laughing when the on-stage interviewer asked if he thought he could overtake Cavani at PSG, which would obviously mean staying there.

"I'm already very happy to be in the top three,"



said Mbappe, who overtook Zlatan Ibrahimovic's PSG tally of 156 goals.

In other awards, Bruno Genesio of Rennes was named best coach. The former Lyon coach was criticized early in the season but stuck to his principles.

Fourth-place Rennes has played some of the best attacking soccer in France, scoring 80 goals in 37 games and only five fewer than top scorers PSG.

The best goalkeeper award went to PSG's Gianluigi Donnarumma, and 21-year-old Marseille defender William Saliba, who is on loan from Premier League team Arsenal, was the best young player.

Boxing World Championships: Nikhat, Manisha and Parveen confirm medals

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian boxers Nikhat Zareen (52kg), Manisha (57kg) and Parveen (63kg) continued their stellar run at the IBA Women's World Boxing Championships in Istanbul on Monday by advancing to the semifinals of their respective events after thrilling victories.

Confirming their first World C'ships medals with a place in the semifinals, Nikhat out-punched England's Charley-Sian Davison 5-0 while young Parveen got the better off Shoirza Zulkaynarova of Tajikistan with an identical margin.

Manisha, on the other hand, dispatched Mongolia's Namun Monkhor in a hard-fought quarterfinal by a 4-1 split decision.

Continuing her stellar run from the prestigious Strandja Memorial tournament where she won the Gold earlier this year, Nikhat handed India its



first medal at this year's tournament with an impressive victory.

The 25-year-old Telangana boxer was all pumped up in her highly physical bout against

Davison. Both boxers were attacking each other ferociously in the first round.

However, the second round was a one way street as Nikhat pounded her opponent with terrific body shots to tire her out while also landing clean and sharp punches.

With the two rounds in the bag, Nikhat then displayed her defensive skills as she no longer felt the need to be on the offensive in the final few minutes of her quarterfinal bout.

The former junior world champion will next square off against Caroline De Almeida of Brazil, who thrashed the 2018 Commonwealth Games silver winner Carly McNaul of Ireland by unanimous decision.

The 24-year-old Manisha moved around the ring and used her long reach to great effect as she had three clean punches in the closely fought last eight contest.

Vinesh, Sakshi book CWG berths



PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Sakshi Malik finally found a way to defeat nemesis Sonam Malik and sealed her place in the Indian team for the Commonwealth Games while Vinesh Phogat did just enough against Antim to emerge winner in the 53kg category trials here on Monday.

Sonam, who recovered from a left leg injury, had made it a habit of beating the

2016 Olympic Bronze medallist at the WFI trials but the day belonged to Sakshi, who beat the young wrestler 8-1.

Later in the final, Sakshi outplayed Manisha 7-1 to ensure that she will be on the plane to Birmingham, where the Games will begin from July 28.

Manisha had ousted Sangeeta Phogat, wife of Bajrang Punia, 7-5 in the semifinals. Vinesh, another star who has been struggling right from the Tokyo Games,

began well as she did not concede a point till the final.

In the final against Antim, she was trailing 0-3 but found a two-point scoring move to reduce deficit. Antim got a bit defensive and tried to maintain distance. In this attempt, she fled the mat and Vinesh challenged referee's decision of not awarding a point.

She won the challenge and since hers was the last scoring point, she won the trials.

It will be a first big-ticket event after her Tokyo Games debacle, where she made an early exit after entering the event as the favourite. What followed her was a harrowing time where she was suspended by WFI for indiscipline during the Games.

After WFI lifted the suspension, Vinesh found the going tough due to mental health issues. She pulled out of the World Championship trials in August last year and has not competed since.

Expectedly, Anshu Malik (57kg), Divya Kakran (68kg) won their trials.

In the final between two World Championship medallists, Anshu beat formidable Sarita Mor 2-1 while Divya won by technical superiority against Nisha Dahiya.

Pooja Gehlot (50kg) and Pooja Sihag (76kg) claimed the other berths in the Indian team.

Bigg Boss was a learning stage for me: Siri Hanumanth

Siri Hanumanth, who rose to fame after entering the Bigg Boss house, will now be seen playing one of the lead roles in aha's new-age web series #BFF. In an exclusive interview with **The Pioneer**, Siri shares about her role, life after Bigg Boss, marriage, and much more

K. RAMYA SREE

Your vibe attracts your tribe. If you want to become someone's BFF (best friend forever) or best flatmate forever, as Aha's new show says, life is better with true friends. Bringing to viewers, a tale of true friendship between two adults is aha, Tamada and Dice Media's new-age web series #BFF. The new series is a remake of Dice Media's popular series *Adulting*, which has seen three successful seasons.

In the midst of life's ups and downs, successes and failures, the two best friends are bound by a friendship that makes for their safe space as they navigate through the customary problems of adulthood. With a twist of humor, #BFF presents the financial struggles,

social validations, parental expectations, and other adulting issues that one commonly goes through in their early twenties and thirties as it captures the journey of two unapologetically imperfect women trying to handle the responsibilities of being independent adults in today's urban Hyderabad.

Bigg Boss fame Siri Hanumanth is playing one of the lead roles in the series, and her excitement knows no bounds.

In an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*, Siri opened up about her role in the series and how she bagged the opportunity. She said, "After Bigg Boss, I was approached by a few projects but didn't sign any of them. When I came to know that aha, Dice Media and Tamada Media were collaborating on a project, I was like, wow. When I heard the story and came to know that this is a remake of *Adulting*, I was impressed and immediately said yes to the project. BFF is Best Flatmate Forever. This is new. We've seen many movies and web series on friendship, but this will be a little different. This is how they lead their lives, doing what they love."

Siri plays Nithya, who is very mature, calm and a composed person in nature.

How can we not ask her about life after Bigg Boss, given how popular she became after entering the show? Sharing the same, she said, "Bigg Boss played a major role in my life. I learnt a lot. Be it the way I talk or behave. The biggest lesson I learnt was to think before I talk and to mute myself when needed. It was a learning stage for me."

The YouTube icon was subject to a lot of hatred and trolling after her stint on Bigg Boss, and she takes it all on a very positive note. She says, "I feel everything happens for the good. All this trolling and controversy were all very new to me. My parents, Shrihan, friends and well-wishers supported me a lot through that phase. It was a task in itself to get out of this. It was only because of my people that I could overcome all the negativity."

Having been part of Youtube, short films, and webseries, Siri's ultimate goal is to get into films. "I've been making short films, webseries, and other projects for the last 5 to 6 years in the hopes of one day making a good film. I am feeling happy and blessed that I got into OTT now. I feel OTT is in its highest phase now and it is overpowering cinema in terms of

viewership. OTT is playing a key role in everyone's lives now, and I hope I get to act in good films from here on," added the young actress.

Meanwhile, Siri's fans can't wait to know some tidbits about her love life. Whenever she posts something on social media, the comments box is always filled with her fans asking her about her would-be Shrihan. Asked when she's going to enter the wedding lock, she gushed away to glory and said, "I agree that I said it in Bigg Boss, but I feel my career just started and we would like to take some time before we tie the knot. We haven't planned anything yet, but it's going to take some time. Doors for my career opened just now, so I want to take up the opportunity."

Coming back to #BFF, Siri says one should watch the show because it is very close to reality. Girls will connect more to this show.

"Lastly, working with Aha felt aha... I've been dreaming of working with Aha ever since it was launched and my dreams finally came true. I'm super duper excited to come up with an interesting project on this platform," said the actress.

On the work front, Siri says she is getting multiple offers but she wants to do the right projects at the right time and that she will decide on her next after the release of #BFF.

This aha original series is all set to premiere on May 20.



Harish Shankar to remake Telugu version of *Raid*

According to the latest Tollywood grapevine, *Gabbar Singh* director Harish Shankar reportedly will be working on Ajay Devgn's 2018 Hindi film *Raid* in Telugu. Harish Shankar has also reportedly visited Mumbai for the pre production work of the same. He reportedly met the concerned Bollywood team for the same.



The makers are reportedly looking out for an apt hero and other cast and crew for the above subject. Harish Shankar is currently

busy with Pawan Kalyan's *Bhavadeeyudu Bhagatsingh* in his second collaboration with the powerstar, earlier he worked with him in *Gabbar Singh* a Telugu remake of Hindi *Dabangg*. *Raid* is a 2018 Hindi crime

film based on the real-life income-tax raids conducted by officers of the Tax Department on Sardar Inder Singh in the 1980s. It is reportedly distinguished as the longest raid in Indian history that lasted for three days and two nights.

VD, Samantha's romantic comedy titled *Kushi*

Vijay Deverakonda and Samantha are coming together for an epic romantic comedy. The makers have unveiled the first look poster of the film on Monday and it confirms that the film is titled *Kushi*.

The film directed by Shiva Nirvana and produced by Naveen Yerneni, Ravishankar Yalamanchili, will release in theatres on December 23 this year, as confirmed in the first look poster. The first look poster features Vijay Deverakonda and Samantha. They make a very good pair and the poster has a lovely vibe to it.

Kushi will be releasing Telugu, Tamil, Kannada,

and Malayalam. Apart from the lead cast, *Kushi* also stars Jayaram, Sachin Khedekar,

Murali Sharma, Lakshmi, Ali, Rohini, Vennela Kishore, Rahul Ramakrishna,

Srikanth Iyengar, Saranya.

The film has fights by Peter Hein.



Kiara not approached for Prabhas starrer *Spirit*

Actress Kiara Advani has denied being approached for superstar Prabhas' next titled *Spirit* directed by *Arjun Reddy* fame Sandeep Reddy Vanga.

A statement issued on behalf of Kiara by her spokesperson stated, "In the wake of recent reports and speculations about Sandeep Reddy Vanga's upcoming film starring Prabhas, as Kiara Advani's spokesperson would like to clear the air about the matter."

"Kiara has not been approached for the film nor has there been any conversation about the same." The spokesperson added that in case of any update, the actress and her team would officially announce and inform everyone and to refrain from indulging in rumors.

Kiara is currently busy promoting her upcoming film *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2*, which also stars Kartik Aaryan and Tabu. *Spirit* will hit the floors once Prabhas wraps up his current commitments - *Project K* and *Salaar*.



Ruler, shared her thoughts on the comedy entertainer at a media interaction.

Talking about her role in *F3*, Sonal said, "There's a reason why the trailer makes no mention of my character in *F3*. It's a role that will catch you off guard. There is a twist in my character. That's why

dy, Sonal mentions that making people laugh is no joke.

"This is my first major comedy role. Playing a role that was purely entertaining was difficult. To be able to entertain with comedy isn't a joke," Sonal said. Sonal further mentioned, "Because this is my first comedy role, I was a little nervous. Before we started shooting, I asked the director if I should watch some comedies. He told me to unwind and enter the set without doing any homework. He is the type of director who takes on our roles and emotes every scene."

"I am confident that the audience will be thoroughly entertained by my character," Sonal conveyed.

Anil Ravipudi directorial *F3* starring Venkatesh and Varun Tej will release in theatres on May 27.

There's a reason why *F3* trailer doesn't show my character: Sonal Chauhan

Sonal Chauhan plays a pivotal role in the upcoming *F3* which she believes was intentionally kept aside in the theatrical trailer

which was released a couple of days ago.

The actress, who has previously appeared in Telugu films such as *Legend*, *Pandaga Chesko*, *Dictator*, and

my character's nature is hidden in the trailer. My character, I am confident, will keep the audience thoroughly entertained."

Having tried a role with full-length come-

A recipient of many national awards and the head of Purnodaya Movie Creations, Edida Nageswara Rao is a noteworthy name in the Telugu movie business. Now his granddaughter Shreeja is making her debut as a producer with the film *First Day, First Show* being presented under her home banner Shreeja Entertainment. The logo of the film was unveiled by renowned director Nag Ashwin at Prasad Lab on Monday.

